TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry







לעילוי נשמת



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וּבָאתָ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם -***"You shall come to whomever will be the kohen in those days . . ."*** (26:3) - Could I possibly go to any kohen other than the one who is my days? Rashi explains: "As he is." [Don't compare him to previous leaders.]

It is told that **R' Meir Shapiro z"l** (1887-1933) once visited the Chafetz Chaim z"l (1838-1933) for a Shabbat. "Say a dvar Torah," said the Chafetz Chaim.

"I came to listen," answered R' Shapiro.

"But I am ill," said the Chafetz Chaim.

"But the Torah says, 'to whomever will be the kohen in those days' – as he is," replied R' Shapiro. [The Chafetz Chaim was a kohen.]

Thereupon, the Chafetz Chaim said a dvar Torah. (Otzar Tzaddikei U'Geonei Ha'dorot p.575)

"A rabbi who replies to people's questions works harder than a doctor dealing with a case of life and death. The doctor is responsible only to the patient, but the rabbi is responsible to G-d." ~ R Moshe Feinstein

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה ה' אֱלֹקיךָ מְצַוְּךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה וְאֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים - "***This day, Hashem, your G-d, commands you la'asot these decrees and the statutes*** . . ." (26:16)

Translated simply, "**לַעֲשׂוֹת**" in the above verse means, "to do." However, "**לַעֲשׂוֹת**" also means, "to make."

Thus, says **R' Aharon Perlow of Karlin z"l** , we can read this verse: "Hashem, your G-d, has commanded you **to make** this day," i.e., to make it worthwhile and memorable. How? Through "these decrees and the statutes," i.e., through mitzvah observance. (Bet Aharon)

Customs for Parashat Ki Tavo

- Ezra ordained that Ki Tavo should be read before Rosh Hashanah in order to usher out the year's curses. [This parashah contains the tochachah/ Moshe's foretelling of the horrible punishments that would befall our nation if we sin.]
- One should not be called for the aliyah that contains the tochachah if he hates the ba'al koreh or if the ba'al koreh hates him.
- It is proper that the one who goes up for the tochachah should think repentant thoughts so that his deeds will not awaken Divine judgment against him.
- In some places, they do not call out: "Ya'amod"/"Arise, so- and-so the son of so-and-so." Rather, they call out: "Arise, whoever wishes." In some places, the person who is called to the tochachah is paid. In some places, the ba'al koreh himself receives the aliyah, and this was the custom of many tzaddikim (including the rebbes of Sanz, Sighet, Munkacz and Lubavitch). If the ba'al koreh is a kohen, the aliyot may be apportioned so that the tochachah will be an eighth aliyah and may be given to a kohen.
- In some places, the one who receives the aliyah that contains the tochachah does not recite a berachah either before or after. The

preceding aliyah ends just prior to the tochachah and the one who receives that aliyah recites the after-berachah. Some wrote harshly against this custom (including R' Shlomo Kluger z"l, R' Eliezer Dovid Gruenwald z"l and R' Moshe Feinstein z"l).

- It is customary to read the tochachah quickly and in a soft voice. However, one must be careful not to read so quietly that the congregation does not hear, because then the congregation will not fulfill the mitzvah of heaing the Torah reading. Some have the custom to read in a loud voice– the purpose being to awaken the congregation to repentance.)

- It is forbidden for the ba'al koreh to have in mind that the tochachah should befall any specific person. Some are careful not to stand directly in front of the ba'al koreh. (The Muncaczer Rebbes insisted that no one stand opposite them when they read the tochachah.) Some also have the custom that the person who received the previous aliyah leaves the bimah before the tochachah is read.



וַיָּרֵֽעוּ אֹתָ֥נוּ הַמִּצְרִ֖ים וַיְעַנּוּנוּ֑ וַיִּתְּנ֥וּ עָלֵ֖ינוּ עֲבֹדָ֥ה קָשָֽׁה -"***The Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us, and they placed hard work upon us.*** *" (26:6)*

R' Yehoshua z"l ("Ostrova Rebbe"; known as the "Toldot Adam") explains that this verse alludes to both the physical and spiritual oppressions which the Egyptians oppressed our ancestors. "The Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us"-physically. "And they placed hard avodah / work upon us"- they caused our avodah / service to Hashem to be difficult. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Admorei Biala-Ostrova)



"When a father complains that his son has taken to evil ways, what should he do? Love him more than ever." ~ Baal Shem Tov.



וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ - *"Then you shall raise your voice and say before Hashem, your Elokim . . ." (26:5)*

Rashi z"l comments: **מַזְכִּיר חַסְדֵי הַמָּקוֹם** - "*He mentions the loving-kindness of the Omnipresent.*"

R' Mordechai Hager z"l (1922-2018; Vizhnitz-Monsey Rebbe) quotes **R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the "Shelah Ha'kadosh"**; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630), who writes: Similarly, whenever Hashem blesses a person with something good or with success, that person should praise Hashem and thank Him for bringing about this good thing in His great mercy.

R' Hager adds: Doing what the Shelah Ha'kadosh suggests will awaken one's Emunah / faith, for he will effectively be acknowledging that there is no coincidence and no ascribing things to the laws of nature. Rather, everything is attributable to Hashgachah Peratit / Hashem's individualized providence. (*Torat Mordechai*)

וְהוֹתִרְךָ ה' לְטוֹבָה בִּפְרִי בִטְנְךָ וּבִפְרִי בְהֶמְתְּךָ וּבִפְרִי אַדְמָתֶךָ עַל הָאֲדָמָה *"Hashem shall give you bountiful goodness, in the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your animals . . ." (28:11)*

The Gemara (Ta'anit 8b) relates that there once was a famine and a plague simultaneously. The sage Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said, "One cannot pray regarding two troubles [i.e., famine and plague] at once. Pray that the famine end because Hashem will not send plenty only to have it go to waste. When He sends plenty, He necessarily will give life also."

R' Yaakov Yisrael Halevi Stern z"l (18th century; maggid /preacher in Kremenets, Volhynia, now Ukraine) writes that, in this light, we may understand our verse as follows: "Hashem shall give you bountiful goodness." And, in order that that bountiful goodness not

go to waste, he also will bless "the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your animals," etc.–more than you asked. (Sefat Emet: Mishlei 10:20)

Why can one not pray regarding two troubles at once?

R' Shimshon Dovid Pincus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) explains: The Gemara is referring to a type of prayer that involves single-minded focus on what is being requested. If one cries out about two things at the same time, it means that he is not focusing sufficiently on any one thing to be assured a response. (*She'arim B'tefilah*)



וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הַסֵּכֶת וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה נִהְיֵיתָ לְעָם לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ - "***Moshe and the kohanim, the levi'm, spoke to all Yisrael, saying, Be attentive and hear, O Yisrael – This day you have become a people to Hashem, your G-d***." (27:9)

R' Moshe David Valle z"l (1697-1776; Italian kabbalist and colleague of R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato z"l) writes: "Be attentive and hear" means "Do not stop paying attention to the curses and warnings that are in this parashah." This is similar to the verse (Mishlei 3:11), "My child, do not despise Hashem's discipline and do not despise his reproof."

In addition, our Sages interpret "**הַסֵּכֶת**" as two words: "**הס**" and "**כת**." The Hebrew letters of "**הס**" (heh-samech) have a gematria of 65, equal to Hashem's Name which is associated with mercy (aleph-dalet-nun-yud). "**כת**" alludes to **לְכַתּוֹשׁ** / pulverize. This teaches that even when Hashem must strike us harshly because of our sins, He also injects an element of mercy.

King David said similarly (Tehilim 23:4), "Your rod and Your staff comfort me." The rod represents punishment, while the staff represents the Shechinah which supports us. (Mishneh L'melech)



תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָבַדְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב מֵרֹב כֹּל – "*because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant*." (28:47)

Is it really possible that merely because one did not serve Hashem happily that he will be deserving of the terrible curses described in our parashah? After all, such a person did at least serve Hashem.



No! writes **R' Meir Yechiel Halevi Halstock z"l** (1852-1928; chassidic rebbe in Ostrowiec, Poland). Rather, the verse should be read as follows: "All these curses will come upon you . . . because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d." Did you feel guilty about this? No, it was "amid gladness and goodness of heart." You were happy and content over the fact that you were not serving Hashem. (Meir Einei Chachamim III)

The anonymous work **Orchot Tzaddikim** (possibly dating to the early medieval period) interprets this verse as follows: "Because–amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant–you did not serve Hashem, your G-d." For example, he writes, drinking wine on Yom Tov is a mitzvah. However, if one focuses on his drink and drinks to excess, and loses sight of the mitzvah, he would be committing the violation described in this verse.

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

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה׳ אֱלֹקיךָ -"You shall be joyous with all the goodness that Hashem, your Elokim, has given you ." (26:11)



R' Moshe Yehoshua Hager z'l (1916-2012; Vizhnitzer Rebbe) explains this verse in the name of his father, **R' Chaim Meir Hager z"l** (1887-1972; Vizhnitzer Rebbe) as follows: "You will be joyous when you believe that all that comes from Hashem is good."

He continues: Simchah / gladness or joy is the key to attaching oneself to Hashem. Without Simchah, a person cannot have even the smallest connection to G-d. Service of Hashem without Simchah is like a body without a soul.

In Tehilim (100:2) **עִבְדוּ אֶת־ה׳ בְּשִׂמְחָה** - "*Serve Hashem with Simchah.*" This, explains the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, is not merely good advice; it is a statement that the only way to serve Hashem is with Simchah. The psalm continues, **בֹּאוּ לְפָנָיו בִּרְנָנָה** - "*Come before Him with joyous song.*" - The only way to come before Him is with joyous song.

Because Simchah is so important, the Yetzer Ha'ra works extra hard to spoil it, notes the Vizhnitzer Rebbe. This includes blurring the line between joy and frivolity, as well as between humility, on the one hand, and self-deprecation that leads to depression, on the other hand. Indeed, Chassidic sources teach that the Yetzer Ha'ra derives greater satisfaction from a person's feeling of depression after sinning than from the sin itself.

Serving Hashem and studying Torah require Simchah. Indeed, the fact that a person has the opportunity to serve Hashem should itself give him Simchah. (Yeshuot Moshe: Ma'adanei Ha'shulchan)

אֶת־ה' הֶאֱמַרְתָּ הַיּוֹם לִהְיוֹת לְךָ לֵאלֹקִים וְלָלֶכֶת בִּדְרָכָיו וְלִשְׁמֹר חֻקָּיו וּמִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְלִשְׁמֹעַ בְּקֹלוֹ. וַה' הֶאֱמִירְךָ הַיּוֹם לִהְיוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סְגֻלָּה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־לָךְ וְלִשְׁמֹר כָּל־מִצְוֹתָיו - *"You have distinguished Hashem today to be Elokim for you, and to walk in His ways, and to observe His decrees, His commandments, and His statutes, and to listen to His voice. And, Hashem has distinguished you today to be for Him a treasured people, as He spoke to you, and to observe all His commandments."* (26:17-18)

R' Alexander Ziskind of Horodna z"l (1739-1794; Belarus) comments: Do not think that the Mitzvot are a burden, like a decree that a master imposes on his servants. To the contrary! Because of Hashem's immense love for us, He has given us a great, priceless gift. (Yesod V'shoresh Ha'avodah: Introduction)

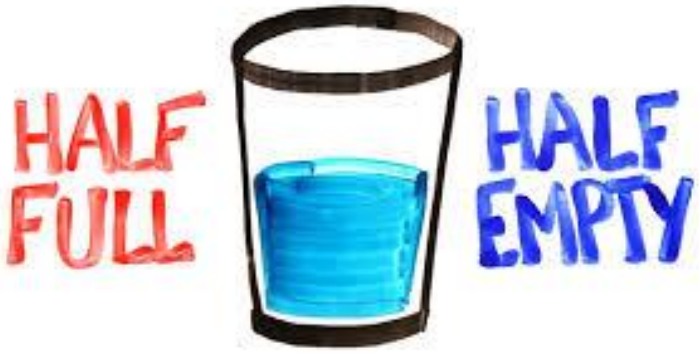


וּבָאתָ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו הִגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ כִּי־ בָאתִי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לַאֲבֹתֵינוּ לָתֶת לָנוּ - *'You shall come to whoever shall be the Kohen in those days, and you shall say to him, "I declare today to Hashem, your G-d, that I have come to the Land."* (26:3)

The mitzvah of bringing Bikurim, the first fruits, is paradigmatic of the middah, character trait, of hakoras hatov, gratitude. This middah is one of the most fundamental principles of human and Heavenly relationships.

Indeed, one who is makir tov, acknowledges his debt of gratitude to Hashem, even in the areas that affect his interpersonal relationships with people (he understands that what he receives is from Hashem, with people serving as His agency) will ultimately

achieve shleimus, completion/perfection, in his relationship with Hashem.



The nature of man is to focus on what he is still missing, rather than on what he has. In order to reach the pinnacle of hakoras hatov, it is critical that one focus on what he has and on what he has received from Hashem. We must stop viewing the glass as half-empty, but rather, as half-full – and place our emphasis on the half that is full.

A well-known story about a chassid who complained to his Rebbe about his difficult lot in life underscores this idea.

"Rebbe," the chassid cried out, "I cannot take it any longer. Life has become so difficult to navigate."

"What happened?" asked the Rebbe.

"Well," the chassid began, "on the one hand, I am blessed with a family of fifteen souls. On the other hand, I have a tiny apartment that would be considered small for a family half our size. Parnassah, a livelihood, is obviously very challenging with so many mouths to feed."

The Rebbe listened intently and said, "Mazel Tov! I was unaware that you had additions to your family, may you derive much nachas, satisfaction, and joy from them. I am so happy that you were able to obtain an apartment. You know how difficult they are to find, and you have a job? Wonderful! Fantastic! - "My dear friend, you are truly a fortunate individual. You have been blessed with so many children, when you are obviously aware that there are a number of chassidim who have yet to be blessed with progeny. The fact that you have a roof over your head and a source of livelihood makes you

one of our more fortunate chassidim. Therefore, my advice to you is to begin by expressing your gratitude to Hashem for all of His munificence. Afterwards, Hashem will bless you in the future. Rather than complain about what you do not yet have, appreciate what you do have now."

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, would thank Hashem nightly for all that he had the good fortune to receive from Him. He would enumerate everything in detail.

Orphaned at a young age, Hashem was with him as he grew up (He is with everyone. The Chafetz Chaim acknowledged and appreciated every moment of success as having been orchestrated by the Almighty.) He helped him to study Torah diligently and author a number of Torah classics. He was blessed with sons-in-law who were outstanding talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars. - This does not mean that his long life was a bed of roses. He, however, ignored the difficulties on which so many others dwell; rather, he focused on his good fortune.



A new perspective on hakoras hatov was taught by **Horav Elya Svei, zl**, to a talmid, student, which I take the liberty of sharing:

One of the Rosh Yeshivah's married students was blessed with a child after years of praying for what so many take for granted. The child was born prematurely and, as a result, suffered from a number of medical issues which required a lengthy stay in the neo-natal intensive care unit of the hospital.

As the day for leaving the hospital neared, the student turned to his Rebbe for advice on how best to show his and his wife's appreciation

to the doctors and nurses who had so ably and lovingly cared for their son. He figured that he would buy something for them. He was surprised when the Rosh Yeshivah disagreed. "Do not buy anything for them," Rav Elya said.

When he saw the look of incredulity on his talmid's face, he explained, "When Shifra and Puah risked their lives to save the lives of the Jewish newborn, Hashem rewarded them, such that they would see an incredible increase in Jewish births. The mere fact that the Jewish midwives saw blessing in their work was their greatest reward. - Therefore, instead of flowers and candy, visit the neo-natal unit every year on your son's birthday. Bring him to visit with the people who so skillfully and devotedly worked with him. This will be the greatest show of gratitude towards them."

The talmid listened. Every year, he celebrated his son's birthday with the neo-natal staff. On the boy's bar mitzvah, the father came with invitations for everyone to attend this milestone occasion.

A short time later, the director of the department wrote a short note to the parents, "Congratulations! We would like you to know how happy your yearly visits have made us feel. We work day in and day out saving children, without knowing what happens to them once they leave our care. It is nice to know what our devotion has achieved. During the years that you shared your son with us, you made us feel a part of your family and demonstrated your boundless gratitude for our work. Thank you."

"Hashem wants us to love Him under all circumstances. When we overcome the trials and challenges in life, we fulfil our purpose in life and allow Hashem to shower us with blessing." ~ Living Emuna.

וְהָיִיתָ מְמַשֵּׁשׁ בַּצָּהֳרַיִם כַּאֲשֶׁר יְמַשֵּׁשׁ הָעִוֵּר בָּאֲפֵלָה - '***You shall grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in the darkness***.' (28:29)



The Yalkut (also Talmud Megillah 24b) questions the implication of this curse. Does it matter to the blind person whether it is dark or not? He does not see anyway?

Rabbi Yosi explains that he once had an experience which provided an answer for him. It was late one night when he saw a blind man walking down the dark street with a torch in his hand. "I questioned him, 'What is the torch to you?' He replied, 'When the torch is in my hand people see me and prevent me from falling into pits.'"

What a powerful lesson for us to absorb. Some people are blind; they cannot see, but no one is aware of their plight. Some people suffer unimaginable pain, but no one knows. Some people are victims of serious trauma, but no one wants to know about their plight, since it is dark, and no one sees them.

Our people have suffered immensely throughout the anti-Semitic darkness that has pervaded the millennia. I say darkness, because the world has turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to our anguish. We suffered, but no one wanted to know. It was not in vogue to recognize Jewish pain. Sympathy was out of the question. Oppression became a way of life, and the resulting lack of self-esteem cultivated a generation that was rife for the blandishments of the Haskalah /Enlightenment.

Why feel like a parasite because no one wants to see you? Assimilate and be like them? When a pogrom, an inquisition, or a holocaust occurs, the world becomes aware of the stark reality: the Jews are suffering!

The tragedies serve as the blind man's torch, letting the world know about our existence. How sad it is to suffer alone. How laudatory is the individual who shines the spotlight on the plight of the blind man.

Anyone who suffers alone – who has experienced a traumatic experience, endured abuse, denigration, humiliation, and either had no one to tell or no one who would listen – is very much like the blind man, only he does not have the comfort and aid of a torch to inform, to scream out to people: "Help me!"

There are many forms of abuse to which our children might be subjected. If we do not shine the spotlight on the darkness, they will continue to suffer alone, and we will have committed the unforgivable, unpardonable act of allowing the blind to grope in the darkness – alone.

Baruch Hashem, our mechanchim today are bnei Torah of the highest caliber. They love Torah; they love teaching Torah; they love each and every one of their students; and they are devoted heart and soul to the mileches ha'kodesh, holy work, that they do. We are, however, all human beings. Therefore, occasionally someone falls through the cracks of the system.

This is not the forum for discussing chinuch issues, parent participation, administration support, etc. My purpose is to call attention to those of our community – young and old – who are groping in darkness. Let us look out for them and be their torch.

As we near the end of the year and approach the beginning of the New Year, may this be a merit for all of us to be blessed with a healthy year filled with nachas and joy.

"Strive to be who Hashem wants you to be, not what others want to see." ~ R Zecharia Wallerstein.

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ – '***You shall rejoice with all of the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you.***' (26:11)

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh writes **ואין טוב אלא תורה, שאם היו בני אדם מרגישין במתיקות ועריבות טוב התורה היו משתגעים ומתלהטים אחריה ולא יחשב בעיניהם מלא עולם כסף וזהב למאומה כי התורה כוללת כל הטובות שבעולם.**

"***If people would truly feel and taste the sweetness of the Torah's great goodness, they would go crazy; they would go out of their minds and chase after Torah, aflame with fiery passion and desire for Torah. They would ignore all the gold and silver in the entire world, considering it as worthless, because the Torah contains all the goodness in the entire world!***"

בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב, "all of the goodness," alludes to the Torah, for there is no greater "good" other than Torah. He adds that if people would sense the incredible unparalleled sweetness and pleasantness associated with the Torah, people would go out of their minds in pursuit of Torah. Money would have no value; nothing would have value, for the Torah includes within it everything – all of the goodness in the world.

These are words that cannot be explained. They must be felt.

In his hakdamah, preface, to his Iglei Tal, **the Sochatchover Rebbe, zl**, writes, "Chazal's dictum, Mitzvos lav l'henos nitnu, 'The performance of mitzvos were not given for one to experience personal pleasure,' does not apply to Torah study. - The study of Torah should engender a heightened sense of joy within a person.

The underlying principle of Torah study establishes the ideal that a person should envision the truth and be overwhelmed with joy by experiencing firsthand the depth and clarity of mind achieved through Torah study.

The primary objective of the mitzvah of limud haTorah is the pleasure and satisfaction one derives when he understands a passage of his learning." Anyone who has ever toiled in Torah and was zocheh,

worthy, of penetrating its depth and capturing its meaning is uniquely aware of this feeling.

A life without value is not life. It is merely existence. From the very onset, children should be inculcated with the notion that there is no true simchah like simchah shel mitzvah. There is no source of eternity like the Torah. It is our life, our future, and the joy of our hearts. One may surely enjoy the wonders and beauty of the world and nature. True joy however, is reserved for matters relating to the spiritual dimension. Only in that realm will one find joy in something of lasting value.

Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, once remarked, "My Olam Habba I am already receiving in olam hazeh when I study Torah, for there is no greater joy in life than (that which is derived from) Torah study."

The story is told that a wealthy philanthropist, well-known for his generosity to yeshivos, once commented to **Horav Aharon Kotler, zl**, "My portion is even greater than that of the Rosh Yeshivah. The Rosh Yeshivah will certainly be the recipient of Olam Habba in the merit of his Torah study. The Rosh Yeshivah, however, has gained nothing from this world. I, however, will receive Olam Habba for my support of Torah. I am like Zevulun, who supports Yissachar. In addition (to my Olam Habba), I am presently enjoying the many pleasures that my wealth allows me to experience."

When Rav Aharon heard this, he immediately rose from his chair and exclaimed, "As far as my Olam Habba is concerned, I have no idea. Of one thing I am certain: I have olam hazeh. You, however, have none! For there is no greater pleasure in the world than Torah study and mitzvah performance!"

"Don't pray to Hashem to ask for what you want. Pray to thank him for all that you already have." ~ R Zecharia Wallerstein.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה בָּעִיר וּבָרוּךְ אַתָּה בַּשָּׂדֶה – *'Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the field.'* (28:3)

A Jew shall remain blessed whether he is in the city together with his chaburah, social group, or if he is alone in the field, away from everyone.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, recalls his years as a student in the Novaradok Yeshivah, an institution which imbued its students with a sense of commitment to Torah and mitzvos that transcend time and place and even social support. Wherever a Novaradoker student found himself, he was somehow able to transcend the vicissitudes of life and the challenges they presented.

For example, Rav Galinsky and a group of students were banished to a prison camp in the frozen tundra of Siberia. On a warm day, it was forty below zero. No beds, sleeping on the floor in the freezing cold, being forced to subsist on scraps of vegetables, because kosher food was non-existent. Yet, this was not the end of the world. They were able to survive amid deprivation; indeed, they thrived in frozen captivity. - It was not the physical challenges that made life difficult. It was the emotional challenge – the desolation and loneliness, separated from family and friends, all alone in the bitter cold, compelled to cope with the overwhelming silence of forced solitude.

How did they survive in a world isolated from humanity? He quotes what became the motto of these bnei Torah. The Navi Malachi (3:16) says, **אָז נִדְבְּרוּ יִרְאֵי ה' אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ**, "*Then those who fear Hashem spoke to one another.*" - Theirs was a pre-established relationship that transcended time and space. True, they were physically separated from one another, but the love and devotion for one another which permeated their essence remained with them, imbuing them to overcome the loneliness that enveloped them during the toughest of times, granting them the ability to endure, to survive, to thrive.

This was Novaradok. A yeshivah – a movement – of extreme dedication to the point of mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice for one objective: to seek the truth. Their commitment to Torah was fabled. Their devotion to one another was legendary. There was a unique, unbreakable bond between students and rebbeim through which they nurtured one another. The pasuk of Az nidberu, emphasizing the relationship between friends, became their motto.

Chazal state, "One who takes leave of his friend should do so only through a halachic discourse, since from this (it will be a catalyst through which), he will remember him" (Brachos 31a). The Yerushalmi adds that it refers to a specific halachah of, Yachid v'rabim, halachah k'rabim. "If there is a dispute between an individual and a group, the halachah follows the majority."

Why is this halachah selected over all others as the halachah to emphasize upon departing from one another? In Novaradok, they gave the following answer: When two people are together, when a group of friends, students are aligned with one another, it is easy for one person to encourage another and, likewise, to receive inspiration, intellectual and emotional stimuli, and support that endures their separation from one another. - This halachah alludes to the idea that one is never alone. He is always part of the group – even when he has moved away from them.

This is the meaning of our opening pasuk, "Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the field." (As) You are blessed when you are in a chevrah, group, of like-minded, Torah oriented, G-d-fearing Jews, who share your common goal within the shul, the bais hamedrash; so shall you be blessed when you must leave, when you are on your own, often in a place far-removed from Torah and mitzvos. - The friendship of the rabim, group, will infuse and maintain you even when you are a yachid, alone. It is difficult when one is alone and must confront the spiritual elements that oppose him.

We have only to study the life of Yosef HaTzaddik to understand the depth of his loneliness, as he was forced to survive spiritually during his wanderings. First, he was alone in the field searching for his brothers. Then, he descended into the immoral depravity of Egypt, living in the house of Potifar whose lecherous wife sought every opportunity to bring him down. This was followed by a stay in the dungeon of Egypt with its criminals and other low-lifes. When he was finally elevated to the position of viceroy, he was not yet safe. He still remained very much alone, a religious Jew among the lewd aristocracy of Egypt.

How did he do it? What gave Yosef the strength of character to remain faithful to Hashem, despite the lack of social support?

The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, explains that the answer lies in the question posed to him by the man/Angel that originally met him when he was searching for his brothers: **וַיִּשְׁאָלֵהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מַה־תְּבַקֵּשׁ** - "*And the man asked him, saying, 'What is it that you seek?*'" (Bereishis 37:15). The man gave him the clue, the key, the secret to surviving the harsh spiritual elements that overwhelm us in this world. "Do you know what you are seeking? Do you have a purpose, a goal, an objective? Do you know where you are going? Do you know what you want?" It is all one question: What is your purpose in life?

These are the opening words of the Mesillas Yesharim: "The bedrock of piety and the root of flawless Divine service lie in man's effort to clarify and verify his duty in the world. He must determine for what he is aiming, and how to achieve this – in all his labors throughout his lifetime."

There it is in a nutshell. Do you know where you are going? Do you have a goal?

Rav Galinsky quotes an analogy from the **Alter m'Novaradok, Horav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, zl**, which underscores this idea. A simple farmer, who had led a bucolic lifestyle far-removed from modern convention, saw a locomotive for the first time. He was absolutely

amazed to discover that one steam engine could pull many train-cars laden with human passengers, agricultural and industrial freight. He wanted to know which of the many cars was the locomotive and which were the cars. He was told to wait until the cars had disengaged from the locomotive. The car that could move by its own locomotion was the locomotive. The other trains were just pulled along.



"Likewise," commented the Alter, "in the yeshivah, we have many students. Some are compared to cars, who are doing well as long as they have someone to follow, to emulate. Then there are those who move of their own volition. These are the locomotives.

How can one discern between the two types of students? When the connection is severed, when they must go out on their own, then it is quite clear who can make it on his own and who will falter." - There are the "Yosefs," and there are the rest of the crowd.

הִגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ - "***I declare today to Hashem, your G-d***" 26:3

The parsha of Bikurim teaches us the significance of hakoras ha'tov, gratitude. We must learn to recognize the good that others do for us and remember the overriding importance of showing appreciation to our benefactors. This will serve as a vehicle for understanding the overwhelming debt of gratitude that we owe to our primary Benefactor, Hashem, without whose beneficence we would be, and have, nothing.

We may fail to recognize another element of hakoras ha'tov. We know we must be grateful to Hashem for the good that He has sent

our way. What about the evil about which we are not even cognizant that He has removed from our path? -There is the accident that did not occur, the illness that we did not contract, and the financial loss that could have happened, but did not. - Our gratitude to Hashem should be boundless.

This idea came to the **Chasam Sofer** as a result of his awareness of the following incident, cited by **Rabbi Paysach Krohn**:

There was a very wealthy man in Pressburg who, although blind, lived alone and somehow was able to take care of himself. One day a group of hooligans, envious of the blind man's wealth, conceived an amateurish plan to enter his home and rob him of his possessions.

They were well- aware of this person's daily ritual. Every morning shortly after breakfast, he would go out for a stroll. Indeed, he would leave his house at just about the same time every day and follow the same route. The hoodlums calculated that if they would prepare the road before he came, by digging a hole and covering it, he would inevitably fall into their trap. They would then rush to his aid like good Samaritans and offer to take him home. Once they had access to the inside of his house, his possessions would be accessible to them.

So, the next morning they arose early, dug the hole, and camouflaged it with leaves, so that no one else would notice and steer him clear of danger. The hoodlums took up their positions as the blind man began his daily stroll. They waited and waited, watching as he came within ten feet of the trap – stopped – and, suddenly, did an about-face. They were shocked. How could he do this? He never changed his ritual. - It seemed that on that particular day, the blind man was exhausted and did not want to go farther. He decided to return home, thereby foiling their plans.

When the Chasam Sofer heard this story, he said that he now had a better understanding of Chazal's words in the Talmud Pesachim 118b. They point out two seemingly contradictory statements in Tehillim.

In Tehillim 117 it is stated, "Praise Hashem, all you People. Laud Him, all you nations. For His kindness to us was overwhelming." Why, ask Chazal, would nations praise Hashem because good things are happening to Jews? If anything, they want to celebrate our downfall!

The Chasam Sofer explains that the nations of the world are acutely aware of the evil they seek to propagate against us, only to be foiled by Hashem.

David Ha'melech observes how so many nations of the world have truly attempted to hurt us, only to be thwarted by Hashem. The Jews are not aware of this – but the nations are. - They should praise Hashem, because they know what could have occurred had Hashem not been protecting us.

תַּ֗חַת אֲשֶׁ֤ר לֹא־עָבַ֙דְתָּ֙ אֶת־יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ בְּשִׂמְחָ֖ה וּבְטֽוּב לֵבָ֑ב -"***Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart.***" (28:47)

Another year has gone by, and Rosh Hashanah is a few weeks away. Chazal delve into the reason that Parashas Ki Savo, with its ninety-eight curses, is read shortly before the New Year.

We suggest that it is a wake-up call, a reminder that whatever has transpired during the course of the past year, whether it was good or bad, happened by design and for a reason. It did not just occur.

Retribution and accountability – two concepts that we often tend to ignore – play important roles. We rarely understand the things that happen to us as being directly correlated to the things we do.

The curses which form the major component of Parashas Ki Savo are a sobering reminder that Hashem responds to our actions – both positive and negative. Even our attitude in mitzvah performance – enthusiasm and joy – determine our reward. Indeed, Moshe Rabbeinu admonished the Jewish People and warned them that they would be

severely punished if they did not serve Hashem with joy and happiness.

This is enigmatic. How can we be enjoined to be happy? One is either a happy person, or he is not. You cannot compel someone to be happy. First, the Torah does not tell us to be happy; it commands us to serve Hashem with joy. One who does not serve Hashem with joy, but rather serves Him as if he must do so, degrades the mitzvah and ridicules the service.

What about happiness, however, at times when one is not actively involved in a religious experience? Who says that one must walk around happy all day?

We suggest that this question reflects a lack of awareness in regard to a fundamental matter. We serve Hashem all of the time – or, at least, we are supposed to. We have no specific time when we don our "service" hat and act differently than we do during the rest of the day. A Jew serves Hashem every waking moment of the day. This should be reflected in his total demeanor. His attitude towards life should be enthusiastic and exciting, demonstrating zest and vibrance. Life gives him opportunity to serve Hashem, to thank Him for all His beneficence. - One who is not happy with life, who is depressed and melancholy, does not appreciate the good Hashem grants him, and, consequently, cannot serve Him properly.

Mitzvah performance should bring joy to our lives. This can occur only if we approach mitzvos with excitement and enthusiasm. For some special mitzvos, joy is an inherent part of the mitzvah. Shabbos is meant to be festive. We sing zemiros, songs, during the meal to express our joy and happiness. In the Friday night zemirah we sing, "Yom zeh l'Yisrael orah v'simchah," "This (Shabbos) day for Yisrael is one of light and gladness."

Iturei Torah cites a story that illustrates this idea: **Horav Simcha Bunim, z.l., m'Peshischa** was a chassidic rebbe whose influence over his followers was powerful yet loving. Hence, it was no wonder that

his chassidim flocked to him from all areas just to be in his presence. If they could not manage to be with him during the week, they would make every effort to spend Shabbos in his presence. Because of this, Shabbos in Peshischa became a singular occasion, a time of heightened joy in which everyone came to be with their beloved rebbe.

One particular chassid was a very bitter and critical person. He perceived something negative in every occurrence and on every occasion. This, of course, did not endear him to people.

Once, the chassid set out before Shabbos with enough time to make it to Peshischa before Shabbos. This was not to occur. Try as he would,there was always "something" that kept coming up, delaying him and deterring him from his destination. When he finally arrived in Peshischa, he went to the Rebbe and explained that he was detained from arriving there before Shabbos.

The Rebbe listened to the bitter chassid recount his tale and told him the following: "Shabbos is a very kind and gracious host, who treats its guests with dignity. For example, when Rosh Chodesh occurs on Shabbos, Shabbos kindly relinquishes its Mussaf and Maftir. When Yom Tov falls on Shabbos, Shabbos grants Yom Tov not only its Mussaf and Maftir, but the actual Torah reading is also changed to accommodate Yom Tov. When Yom Kippur falls out on Shabbos, not only are the readings, Haftorah and Mussaf changed, the festive Shabbos meals are also deferred in honor of Yom Kippur.

"In contrast, when Tishah B'Av, our national day of mourning, coincides with Shabbos, with its foreboding and accompanying sadness and depression, a different attitude reigns. It is as if Shabbos were to say, 'No, you cannot come today. It is a time of joy, and you bring sadness and depression. You must come at another time!'"

The Rebbe continued, "It is quite possible that you did not make it for Shabbos, because Shabbos did not want any part of you. You are

bitter and disgruntled – the antithesis of Shabbos. - Unhappiness and dejection – and those who spawn it – are not welcome guests until the joy that radiates throughout Shabbos is over. - When you change your attitude towards life and people, you might receive an invitation."

יַכְּךָ ה' בְּשִׁגָּעוֹן. וְהָיִיתָ מְשֻׁגָּע מִמַּרְאֵה עֵינֶיךָ – '***Hashem will strike you with madness…You will go mad from the sight of your eyes***.' (28:28,34) Twice we are cursed with the dreadful affliction of insanity. Is once not enough?



If we peruse the Tochachah, Rebuke, we note that with each successive curse of the ninety-eight curses, the misfortune that has to befall us gets greater and greater. Since each curse is associated with a harsher punishment, it is strange that the Torah repeats the curse of insanity. Insane is insane! Does making a person "more" insane add to the curse?

The Ketzos HaChoshen explains that there are truly variant levels of insanity. When a person loses his mind, when he no longer thinks rationally, when he is not in control of his faculties, it is extremely tragic. However, in some scenarios the individual is unaware of his actions and does not regret his behavior. He does not know what he is doing. In fact, he thinks that he is normal. It is the rest of the world which is insane.

There is a worse conceivable situation. This is when a perfectly normal person is subjugated by one who has lost his mind. In this situation, the crazy person compels the normal person to act in a

crazy manner, because, sadly, this is all he knows. His bizarre perspective on life has become the new "normal." He, therefore, expects the normal person under his control to act as bizarrely as he does. - There is nothing worse than a normal person being relegated to act as if he were meshugah.

The Torah writes, **וְהָיִיתָ מְשֻׁגָּע מִמַּרְאֵה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה** - "*You will go mad from the sight of your eyes that you will see.*" - This means that we will become distraught from the way we are forced to act before others, knowing fully well that we are not crazy – they are! We are perfectly sane and normal, but we are being driven out of our minds by having to witness our insane behavior just to satisfy others.

גַּם כָּל־חֳלִי וְכָל־מַכָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא כָתוּב בְּסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת יַעְלֵם ה' עָלֶיךָ עַד הִשָּׁמְדֶךָ
"***Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this Torah, Hashem will bring them upon you.***" (28:61)

One would think that ninety-eight curses should be sufficient warning to impact the nation. One has only to read the curses specifically, and his hair would stand on end from fright. Yet, it appears that Hashem seems to "throw in" one more curse for "good measure." - In case there might be something that was missed, any sickness or plague that was not specifically mentioned, it too will be included.

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, explains that the Tochachah is more than an admonition. It is referred to as Divrei HaBris, Words of the Covenant. Indeed, the tragedies, the misfortunes that are destined to occur as a result of our egregious behavior, are in themselves part of our covenant with Hashem. Without the threat of punishment, our bond with Hashem would be severed. Without the fear of serious retribution, without realizing this fear, we might disconnect from the Torah way of life and eventually leave Hashem altogether.

It is only as a result of this painful rod that we keep on returning. We know what happens when we leave; therefore, we keep on

returning. What happens after we have, Heaven forbid, exhausted all ninety-seven curses? What will become of us? How will we be able to maintain the Divrei HaBris?

This is why the Torah adds one last curse, throwing every imaginable punishment at us. We do not have to worry. Even after Hashem has delivered all of the previous punishments, there is still more. He will never let us go. Regardless of how much we have suffered, Hashem will keep the sword over our collective heads to ensure our eventual return.

These are dreadful curses, but they are the admonishment of a loving Father, who will do whatever it takes to see to it that His children never leave.



תַּ֗חַת אֲשֶׁ֤ר לֹא־עָבַ֙דְתָּ֙ אֶת־יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ בְּשִׂמְחָ֖ה וּבְטֽוּב לֵבָ֑ב -"***Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart.***" (28:47)

The Torah emphasizes that the underlying reason Klal Yisrael fell prey to the many curses that Moshe enumerated was their lack of joy in mitzvah observance.

This is enigmatic! Imagine that one is careful to observe the mitzvos, even punctilious in their observance. Yet, if he lacks "gladness of heart" in performing the mitzvos, he might be subjected to terrible curses. Is this right?

Horav M.D. Soloveitchik, distinguishes between two types of sin. The first is the sinner who transgresses and is remorseful about it. He is aware that he did something wrong, that he fell into the clutches of the yetzer hora, evil inclination. In such a case, we hope that he will one day repent his sins and return to Hashem.

Unfortunately, a second type is represented by the sinner who is really not concerned with his actions. He does not view his deeds as iniquitous. Indeed, he even "feels good" about what he has done.

Such an individual has fallen into an abyss that offers very little hope for his return.

With the above in mind, Horav Soloveitchik presents a homiletic rendering of the pasuk. "Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d," - How was this lack of service manifest? In what manner was the sin executed? - "With gladness and goodness of heart."

There was joy implicit in your transgression. Because it meant nothing to you that you sinned against Hashem, you have created a situation in which hope for teshuvah, repentance, is not realistic. Thus, the curses will befall you. - Even in iniquity there is hope, as long as the sinner is remorseful.

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ אַתָּה וְהַלֵּוִי וְהַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבֶּךָ
"***And you shall rejoice in all the good which Hashem your Gd has given you, and to your house, you and the Levi and the stranger that it is in your midst***." (26:11)

The Torah is making us aware that all the "good" which one possesses is of no value if he takes it only for himself and does not share it equally with those less fortunate than he. - When one is ready to share in the good which Hashem has given, that he is truly in possession of "all the good".

We learn from this posuk that one must implant in his mind that whatever he possesses is a gift from Hashem. This gift is given to him on the condition that he exercise his ownership over it properly, by sharing it with those who are less fortunate, thereby bringing joy into their lives.

"Challenges are not sent to destroy you - they are sent to promote you." ~ R' Zecharia Wallerstein.





What is a way for a yeshiva man to prepare for a new zman in yeshiva?

First of all, tefilla – you must ask Hashem for help. Say: "please Hashem give me success in my learning this zman – and a little lishma too."

Ask for it! By the way, not only in the beginning of the zman; it's a good idea all the time. Every day, when you're starting a sugya, open up the gemara and say: "Ribono Shel Olam, help me." It's not a bad idea at all.

Secondly, make up your mind that life is short. You only have one hundred and twenty years to live and therefore you can't afford to waste time. So make up your mind: "In the yeshiva I will talk only in divrei Torah." In the beis medrash don't talk about anything else. The beis medrash should be only a place of learning.

Number three: Make sure to get along with your chavrusa. The Mishna in Avos 1:6 says: **קְנֵה לְךָ חָבֵר, וֶהֱוֵי דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת** – '*acquire for yourself a companion and judge all men favourably.*'

You can't keep a chaver if you're not dan l'kaf zchus. Many people break off from the chaveirim because of some middos. So always give him the benefit of the doubt, and try as much as possible to get along with your chavrusa. It's very important to get along with your

chavrusa. And even though he may not be such a great help in Torah but it's a great help in your middos. - Sometimes it helps you in both. Getting along with people – also with your wife – is a very big shleimus; it's a very great perfection of character and a very great achievement.



Is there anything wrong with smoking only one cigarette a day?

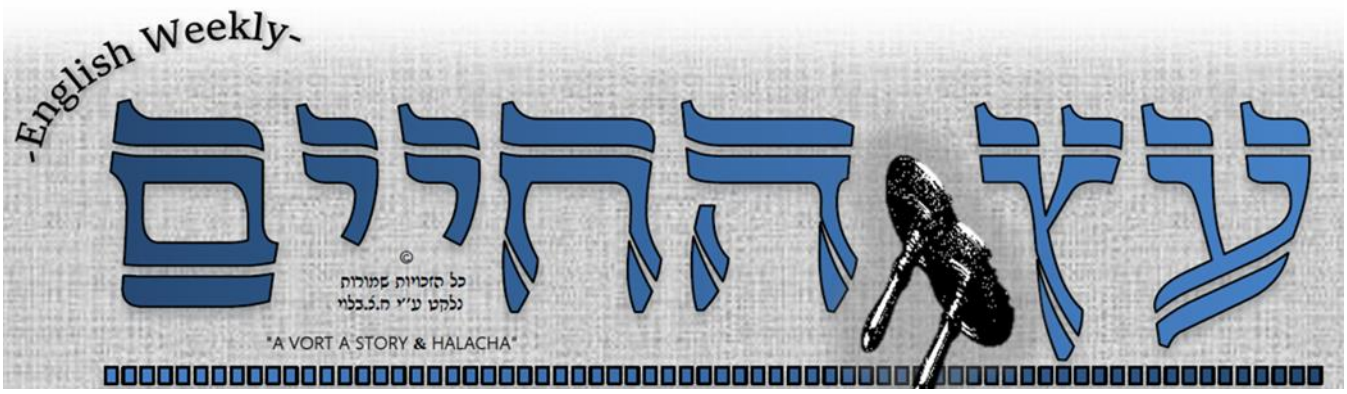
If you'll give me a contract that it won't be more than one cigarette, I'll agree. But since you cannot give such a contract, you have to know it's the beginning of a career of chain smoking. Eventually that's what happens.



You have to know that in all things there's a principle: The first step is what's most important. Someday I'll talk about that bli neder. The first step! Be careful with that first step!

Let's say you're going someplace on the street and somebody starts walking with you and he says, "Come into this place with me," and so you walk in with him. You have to know that the first step you just took is the beginning of a career either upward to Hakodosh Boruch Hu or down to Gehinom. It depends where he's taking you.

Just one step! If you look back, you'll see in your career somebody persuaded you to take one step in the right direction! And therefore the first cigarette is the beginning of the end.

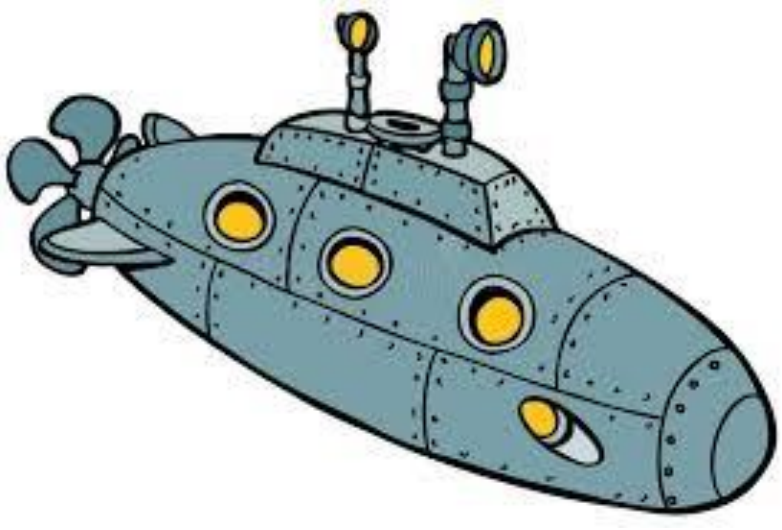


The Baal Shem Tov once turned to a father who had an only son and he asked him, "Tell me, how much do you love your son?"

The man was at a loss for words, he just could not put into words just how much he lived his only son.

The Baal Shem Tov told him, "I love even the worst Yid more than you love your only son and Hashem loves him even more."

Harav Shalom Shwadron זצוק״ל Said Over The Following Story :



There was a gentile soldier called Mike who was on duty during World War II. In combat, he got injured by some shrapnel which penetrated his body. The law was that any soldier who was injured received his full wages from the government, while being able to rest and do nothing all day. Every few months Mike was obligated to go to a doctor to get an evaluation to see if he was still eligible for his monthly stipend.

During his "sabbatical" Mike began to think about life, he did some serious soul searching. He travelled around while trying out many different cultures, until one day he realized **כי הכל הבל הבלים** and the only true place was by the chosen nation – the Jewish people. Mike became a **גר צדק**. Soon after, Mike became Michoel, and he went

to Yeshiva and was striving for greatness. Michoel was a masmid, and he still had full support from the government.

A short while after becoming a Yid, Michoel miraculously completely recovered, and the doctor told him that he was now a healthy man. They sent him a notice that he would no longer be receiving his monthly stipend. This was bad news for Michoel. How would he have the money to be able to support himself to sit and learn Torah?

Michoel would not give up. He decided he was going to appeal and try to make a claim against the decision that he should not receive money anymore. He went from doctor to doctor, but each one told him there had no chance, he was healthy. His last try was to arrange a court date with the government court. The day of the judgement came, and Michoel stated his position. The judge told him, "Sir, your claim is irrational, the doctors say you are perfectly healthy what right do you have to claim this money".

Michoel responded, "Dear Judge, if I fail to receive this monthly stipend how will support myself? I have no source of income. I have no job!"

"Why don't you go and get a job?" The judge asked.

"Dear Judge, I sit and learn Torah all day and I am learning how to be a *talmid chachom*".

"*Talmid chachom*?" The judge asked. Let me tell you a personal story: During the war days I oversaw driving a submarine. During that time, something malfunctioned and we were obligated to remain under the water for quite some time. Everyone on our submarine was terribly frightened and depressed. Every day I had to "break my head" with all sorts of ways to cheer up the other soldiers. There was one exception. In our submarine, there was one cabin that I went into where a group of three Jewish books that they were studying from. Happiness always resonated from their faces. Not once did any of these three men need to be cheered up. - I once asked them, "What

it is that you are doing that makes you so happy in this prison? We don't even know if we will get out of here alive!" They told me they were becoming *talmidei chachomim*".

So, my friend, if you are telling me that you are doing the same acts as they were, I will make sure you that will be taken care of for the rest of your life."



Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

(כו:יא) ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן ה' אלקיך... – '***You shall rejoice with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given to you***…' (26:11)

The Tzadik **Rebbe Moshe Leib of Sasov, zt"l**, explains:

We must realize that everything is given to us by Hashem, and nothing comes to us by way of man. It is better to have one Kav (a small measure) that comes from Hashem with tranquillity and calmness (**שלווה ובנחת**), than ten Kavim that come by way of toil through man.

Rav Nachman of Breslev (the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov) explains this Posuk that even when a person cries before Hashem, the crying must come from joy (**שמחה**) and not from grief (**עצבות**). The hint to this is that the letters of the word **בכיה** stand for **בְּשִׁמְךָ יְגִילוּן כָּל הַיּוֹם**, In Your Name they rejoice all day long (Tehillim 89:17).

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages



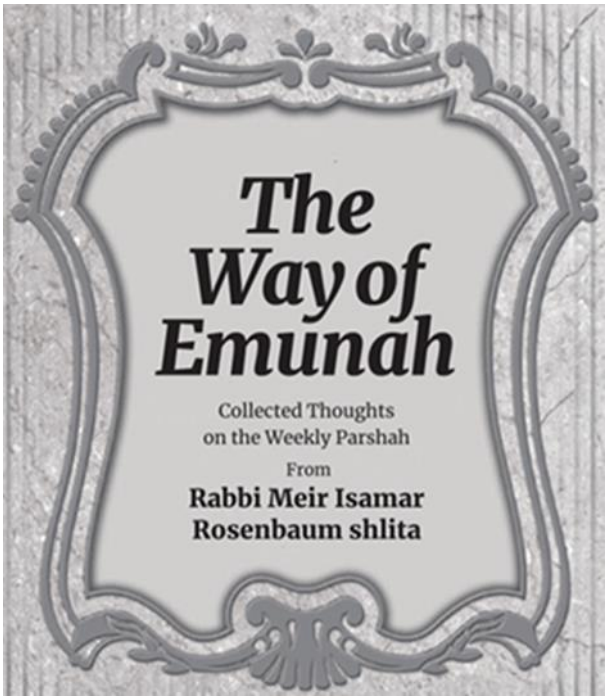
The Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, **Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, zt"l**, was very sensitive to the concept that every action we do will eventually be weighed on a scale, and because of this, he was constantly learning Mussar from the occurrences of everyday life.

A Talmid who accompanied Rav Segal reported, "It was Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul and Rav Segal was returning home from Austria. We boarded the plane, and the pilot began the preflight announcements. He said, 'Please fasten your seatbelt before take-off.'

Rav Segal turned to me and said, 'You hear what they're saying? Elul is here. You have to first strap in before taking off. You have to first have a plan before you can fly up!'"

R' Yerucham Levovitz says that the best thing a person can do for himself is to be an Ish Klal, someone who busies himself with others. It's a great investment and will help with judgement for the coming year.

We all look for zechusim to add to our account; the best zechus is to help others. When we help others, we are viewed as someone Klal Yisroel depends on thereby making the zechus ha'rabim a real zechus for us to have a good year and more ability to continue helping.



וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטֶּנֶא מִיָּדֶךָ וְהִנִּיחוֹ לִפְנֵי מִזְבַּח ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ - '***And the kohen will take the basket from your hand, and he will put it before the Mizbeach of Hashem***.' (26:4)

- **Giving Hand-to-Hand is Better**

A story once occurred at a festive gathering to celebrate the tenayim of a new chosson and kallah. All of the guests were sitting and waiting for the tenayim to be read when suddenly the father of the bride refused to sign on the document that obligated him to pay his daughter's dowry. He claimed that he should be believed based on his word, as he was the type of person who never told a lie and, in any case, no one would lie about their own child. Therefore, he should be trusted without the need for a signed contract.

Amongst those in attendance was **Rav Elchonon Wasserman zt"l**. When he saw that the father was stubbornly insisting and that this could place the entire shidduch in danger, he spoke up and said to the man, "Your claim is incorrect. You say that no one would lie about their own child, but this is not true. The proof of this is that during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, we tell Hashem: 'Remember me for life, oh King who desires life.' We are Hashem's children and we trust in Him to grant us life. So why do we then say 'and write us in the book of life'? Why can't we rely on Him without making Him write it down?' We see from here that a promise is not sufficient unless it is in writing!"

Rav Moshe Londinsky zt"l, Rosh Yeshivas Radin, added that even a written promise is not as good as something given from hand-to-hand. This is seen from the bikkurim. When one goes to his field and sees the first fruits, he ties them with a reed and later puts them

in a basket and he takes them to Yerushalaim. After all of this, one certainly can assume that he will fulfil his pledge and give them to the kohen. Still and all, the Torah says that he must give them to the hand of the kohen, and the kohen must take the basket from him. Why is this necessary? Because one cannot be 100% sure that the bikkurim will be given until the kohen takes it.

- **Elul in Russia**



We are in the midst of the holy and awesome month of Elul and we are all trembling before the Day of Judgment. **The Skverer Rebbe zy"a** described how the month of Elul looked in Russia generations ago.

The fear and awe amongst the chasidim was tangible as they awaited the Yom Hadin. Even the simple waggoneers would sit all day in the bais medrash and say Tehillim.

One of the chasidim, R' Monya z"l, added his own memory of Elul in the shtetl. He recalled that when he was a child, the way the little boys knew that it was Elul was that they would see that their melamed's eyes were red from crying. They then understood that the summer was over, and it was time to get serious.



Rav Nosson Einfeld, of Kollel Chazon Ish shared the story of a Gerer Chosid who lost all his family, but survived WW2 and came over to Eretz Yisrael. Before he left Europe, he went back to his hometown and managed to locate a bag of gold that his parents had buried there. [They had been extremely wealthy pre-war.] He retrieved the gold, and he brought it back to Eretz Yisrael.

When he got to Eretz Yisrael, life was extremely difficult. There was a shortage of food, and people were poverty stricken. He had his sack of gold, but nevertheless, he was struggling with life. He didn't want to fritter away his gold, he wanted to invest it.

One day he was walking in Bnei Brak – the fledgling little town, suddenly he sees an elderly man stooped over – he has round horn-rimmed glasses and walking with a cane. He realizes that this is Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz – The Chazon Ish. Although he was a Gerer chasid, he had heard about the famed Chazon Ish, but had never met him.

He went over to the Chazon Ish to wish him Shalom Aleichem and to introduce himself. He told him that he escaped the war, but he is a lone survivor. He told the Chazon Ish how he was struggling, however

he had a bag of gold worth a small fortune – How should he invest it?

The Chazon Ish looks at him, and picks up his cane, and he points to the empty unbuilt area of land [which would eventually be Bnei Brak] , and says, "Take all your gold, and buy as many dunams of land as you can, it will be a good investment." – The Chazon Ish wished him hatzlocho and walked off.

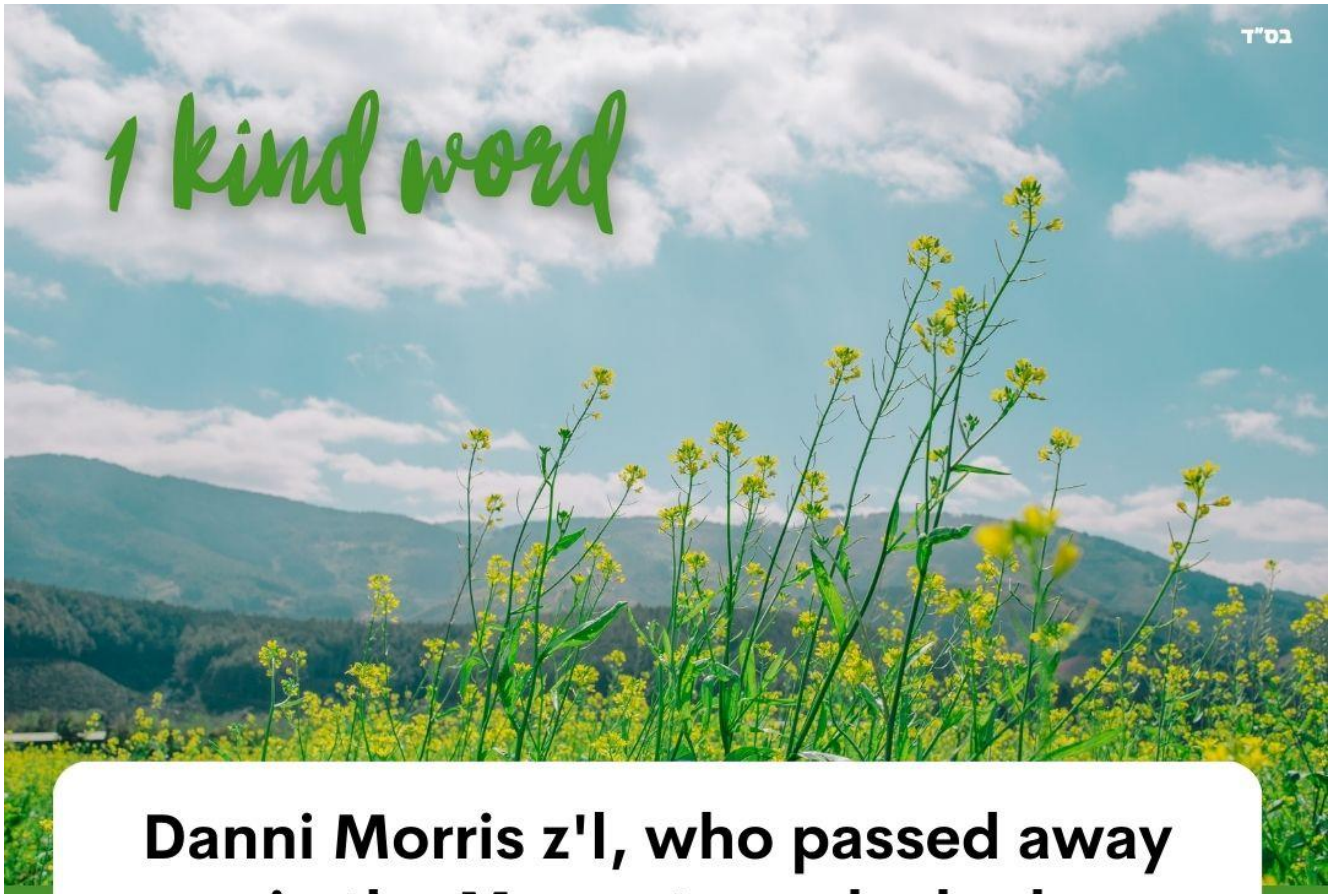
The Gerer chasid thought, "What does this old man know? He knows nothing about investments. This is just wild uninhabited land. This is a little tiny town; nothing is going to happen here. It doesn't make any sense." – He didn't invest his gold. Sadly, he made some other bad investment which went sour, and he had nothing left.

A relatively short time later, the demand for housing in Bnei Brak exploded, and within a decade or two, any plot of land was very sought after and became very valuable. He would have become a multi-millionaire.

When the Gerer Chasid met Rav Nosson Einfeld, he said to him, "I could have been one of the richest people in Israel had I listened to the Chazon Ish's advice and bought this land. All of Bnei Brak would have belonged to me. I would have become a multi-millionaire, but I didn't listen, I didn't seize the opportunity, and I have nothing left to show for it."

We are now in the month of Ellul. We have an incredible opportunity to invest in our avoidas Hashem and have something to show on Rosh Hashana. – We can become spiritually wealthy from this month – Let's not be foolish and be sure to invest!

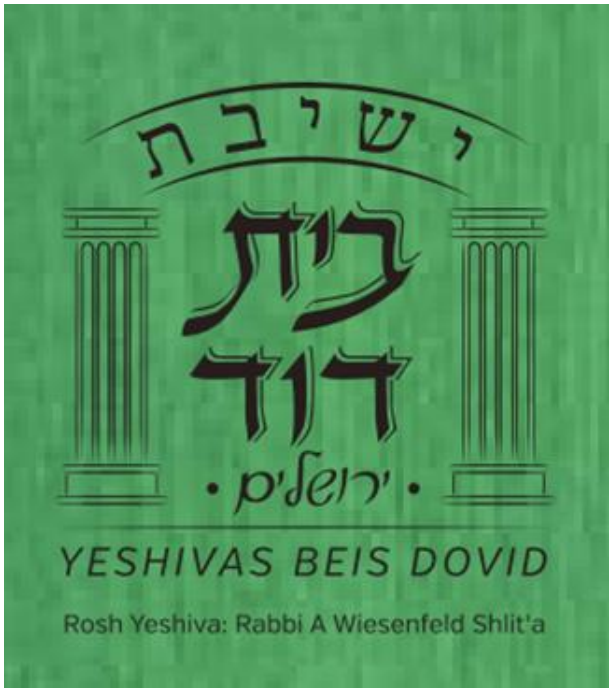
"Anyone who brings comfort to others, brings comfort to Hashem." ~ Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa (Pirkei Avos 3:10).



Danni Morris z'l, who passed away in the Meron tragedy, had previously studied in the RYNJ Yeshiva in NJ.
When the non-Jewish janitor heard the tragic news he asked to see a picture of the boy. When he saw the photo he began to cry.
He said "that kid would always say a warm good morning to me and it left me with a nice feeling all day".

Ani L'dodi - This is a time of year to think of others

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שמונה עשרה

Taking Time to Understand the Words

The Mishnah (Berachos 30b) relates that the Chassidim ha'Rishonim (the early pious ones) would meditate for an hour before they prayed in order to conjure the proper focus. The Beraisa there (32b) elaborates and says that they meditated for an hour before they prayed, they spent an hour praying Shemoneh Esrei, and they meditated for an hour afterwards, for a total of three hours for every Shemoneh Esrei. (See the Gemara there which explains how they were able to learn Torah and earn a living if they spent nine hours a day in prayer!)

We see from there that if they spent a full hour reciting the Shemoneh Esrei, and there are approximately 600 words in the Shemoneh Esrei, this means that they spent six seconds on every word. That is the deep concentration that they had.

Watching the Gedolim During Shemoneh Esrei

In our efforts to develop our own, unique relationship with prayer, we can learn a lot about how to approach prayer by observing how the Gedolim conducted themselves during Shemoneh Esrei.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l would stand erect and motionlessness when he davened the Shemoneh Esrei. When asked why he stood so still, he related that he was once brought in for an interrogation by the Communist authorities in the city of Luban, Russia, where he served as the Rav. He was forced to stand at attention during the entire ordeal.

Rav Moshe resolved that from that time on, he would do the same when davening Shemoneh Esrei. After all, he reasoned, standing at

attention in Luban was a display of reverence and submission to the Russian authorities; surely standing before Hashem, the King of Kings, should be done with at least the same degree of reverence and submission.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l related about his rebbi, the **Alter of Slabodka**, that during World War I he was in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei when bombs began to fall. Instinctively, everyone in the room threw themselves to the floor, with the exception of the Alter, who stood erect until he finished his prayer. - He then looked around and asked in all innocence, "What happened here"?



אָרוּר מַקֵּלֶה אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ - וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן
"***Cursed is the one who degrades his father or his mother, and the entire people will say, Amen***". (27:16)

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen of Dvinsk zt"l, in his sefer Meshech Chachma, says that the wording of the Torah מַקֵּלֶה is from the root "**קל**", which means light or easy.

A child may cause pain to his parent, thinking that it is no big deal. After all, his loving parent will forgive him afterwards, not wanting his child to receive a punishment for his actions. To counter that attitude, the Torah says, אָרוּר, this child will be cursed. He may never cause pain to a parent.

We should never act disrespectfully to our parents, thinking that it is okay since they will eventually forgive us. Our parents deserve our utmost respect in words, deeds, and even in our hearts!

Rabbi Daniel Glatstein - Every Word a Mitzvah

During the month of Elul, it's interesting to note something about L'Dovid Hashem Ori, Psalm 27, which we recite every day. If you look closely, every single letter of the Hebrew alphabet appears in the chapter, except for one—the letter gimmel. What's the reason for this? Why is there no gimmel?

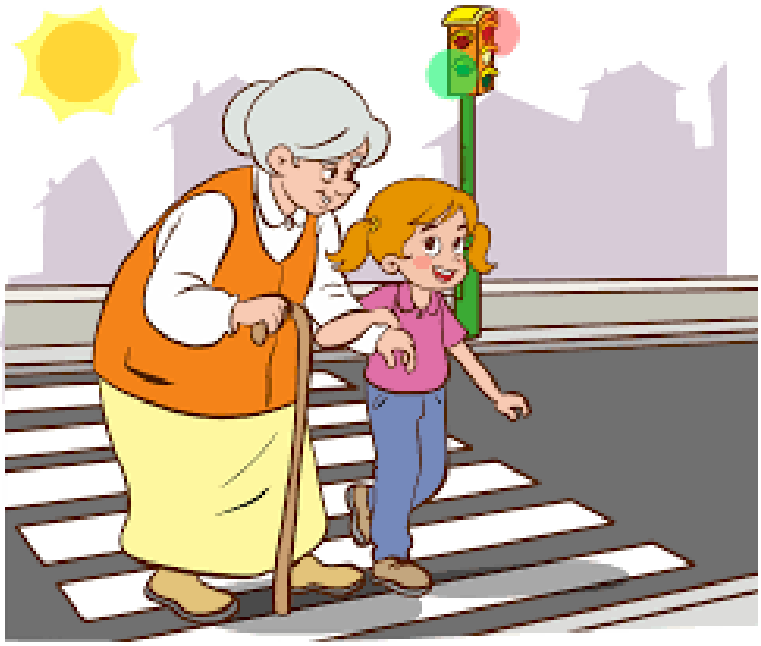
The explanation is as follows.

The main focus of the chapter is the Pasuk, "**אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת־ה׳ אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ שִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־ה׳ כָּל־יְמֵי חַיַּי**—One thing I ask of Hashem, this is what I seek: to sit in the house of Hashem all the days of my life." What does that mean? It's about the desire to sit in the house of Hashem, to understand and reflect on His ways, which is clearly a reference to Torah learning.

During this month, what's on our minds are the scales of judgment. Rosh Hashanah is approaching, and we know how it works: Hashem weighs all our merits and sins. And as the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva 3:3) tells us, if you have more mitzvos than sins, you're written and sealed for a good year. If it's the opposite, then chas v'shalom, we know the consequences. And if we're 50-50, you hang in the balance, and we do everything we can to tilt the scales in our favor.

There's an amazing Gemara (*Berachos* 16a) which discusses a Pasuk in Parshas Balak. "*K'n'chalim nitayu k'ahalim nata Hashem*—Like streams planted, like tents Hashem has planted." This Pasuk compares tents to streams.

The Gemara explains that tents refer to the tents of Torah, and the streams refer to those that can be used as a mikvah. What's the comparison between a stream and a tent of Torah? Just like a stream can take a person from impurity to purity, the tent of Torah can take a person from demerit to merit. When you learn Torah, it can tilt the scales in the favour of merit.



Now, asks the **Chofetz Chaim**, what does this mean? Can't you tilt the scales by doing any mitzvah? If you help an old lady cross the street, aren't you performing a mitzvah? If you visit the sick or lend money to someone in need, aren't you tilting the scales with those good deeds? So why does the Gemara single out Torah learning?

The Chofetz Chaim answers that yes, while all mitzvos tilt the scales, Torah learning has a unique power. When Hashem evaluates our mitzvos and aveiros, it's not just about quality—it's also about quantity. And one particular category can be especially dangerous, and that's lashon hara.

How many people can you kill in one day? Even the worst criminals in history can only do so much in a single day. But when it comes to lashon hara, every single word is a separate sin. The Chofetz Chaim made a calculation that in every minute, you can speak 200 words, so if you talk for three minutes, you could speak 600 words of lashon hara. How many old ladies are there to help cross the street to balance that out? There aren't enough old ladies in the whole continent of Australia to outweigh three minutes of lashon hara!

So really, there's only one way to tilt the scales, and that's through the tent of Torah, Torah learning. Because with each minute of learning, you can say a few hundred words of Torah. Ten minutes of learning equals 2,000 words, each one a separate mitzvah.

Davening Shacharis is only one mitzvah. When you're done with davening, you've performed the mitzvah of tefillah, tallis, tefillin, Birchas HaTorah, Shema, zechiras yetzias mitzrayim. The better

you daven, qualitatively, your davening is more valuable. But Shacharis is Shacharis. However, the Vilna Gaon writes that each word of Torah is a separate mitzvah.

If I help an old lady cross the street, isn't each step I take another mitzvah? No, each step is expanding the mitzvah. All the effort you put in expands that one act of the mitzvah. But with Torah, each word is considered a separate mitzvah.

They once posed a question to **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l**. Nowadays, there are many seforim which are very wordy. They might take one idea and spread it across five pages. Is each word in those books a separate mitzvah? Rav Yaakov said no. Only if each word was written with exactitude can we say that each word is a separate mitzvah. When asked for an example, Rav Yaakov said even Mishna Berurah. It is certainly true of seforim written before the era of the Chofetz Chaim, and certainly Chumash with Rashi, for example.

Therefore, during the month of Elul, while we do many mitzvos, and acts of kindness are certainly fundamental, especially this month, the special focus is on Torah learning. That is the "one thing I ask of Hashem." This singular focus on Torah learning can tilt the scales more than anything else.

The letter gimmel, the Gemara (Shabbos 104a) tells us, stands for gemillus chasadim, and is therefore absent from L'Dovid Hashem. It is to emphasize the centrality and power of Limud HaTorah during this month of Elul. This doesn't mean we shouldn't perform gemillus chasadim or tzedakah. Of course we should, and in great measure. Rather, as a means of motivation and inspiration to excel in the quantity and quality of our Limud HaTorah, the words and letters within L'Dovid Hashem remind us.

May we use the moments of this month and the days before Rosh Hashanah toward the lofty endeavour of Limud HaTorah.

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From our Sages

וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל־פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה – *'You shall take of the first of all the fruit of the land . . .' (26:2)*

Everything that is for the sake of G-d should be of the best and most beautiful. When one builds a house of prayer, it should be more beautiful than his own dwelling. When one feeds the hungry, he should feed him of the best and sweetest of his table. When one clothes the naked, he should clothe him with the finest of his clothes. Whenever one designates something for a holy purpose, he should sanctify the finest of his possessions, as it is written (Leviticus 3:16), "The choicest to G-d." ~ (Maimonides)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה בָּעִיר וּבָרוּךְ אַתָּה בַּשָּׂדֶה – *'Blessed be you in the city, and blessed be you in the field . . .' (28:3)*

Don't be "a *tzaddik* in a fur coat"; rather, your goodness should influence your surroundings, in the "city" and the "field."

(There are two ways to get warm on a cold winter day: build a fire, which warms everyone else in the room as well; or wrap yourself in furs, which conserves your own warmth but does not generate any heat or warm anyone else. Thus chassidim would refer to a righteous person whose only concern is with his own righteousness as "a *tzaddik* in a fur coat.") ~ (Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa)

"It is easy for a rabbi to establish prohibitions, but a rabbi's real strength is to teach Torah and rule on lawwith an emphasis on what is permitted." ~ Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה נֶהְיֵיתָ לְעָם – '***This day you have become a people.***' *(27:9)*

The Jewish people are unique among the peoples of the world: their nationhood was forged not at the point at which they gained their own land, or developed a common language or culture, but on the day on which they pledged to uphold the Torah . . . ~ (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch)

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל



You probably knew that we should be grateful for the mitzvos that Hashem commanded us to perform. But did you know that commenting on a verse in this week's parsha (Devorim 26:16), Rashi writes: **הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מְצַוְּךָ בְּכָל יוֹם יִהְיוּ בְעֵינֶיךָ חֲדָשִׁים כְּאִלּוּ בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם נִצְטַוֵּיתָ עֲלֵיהֶם** -Every day, you shall regard the mitzvos as if they are brand new, as though you were commanded regarding them today!

We are accustomed to hearing: "accept suffering with love". That's true. But we must not forget that we should also accept blessings with love! This is expressed in this verse of our parsha- **וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־ הַטּוֹב** – 'And you should rejoice with all the good that Hashem, your G-d has given to you…'

Hashem wants us to look at all the blessings of our lives and rejoice!



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

- **If we must leave the merit of our good deeds for our offspring, how will we ourselves survive?**

וְהוֹתִרְךָ ה' לְטוֹבָה בִּפְרִי בִטְנְךָ וּבִפְרִי בְהֶמְתְּךָ וּבִפְרִי אַדְמָתְךָ עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לַאֲבֹתֶיךָ לָתֶת לָךְ (28,11) "***And Hashem will cause you to remain for the good in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your land, on the land which Hashem swore to your forefathers to give to you. Hashem will open up for you His good treasury - the heaven, to give the rain of your land in its time, and to bless all the work of your hands***."

It seems to me that the posuk can be explained according to the Midrash on parshas Bechukosai, which says that the posuk "And I will remember my covenant, Ya'akov (Vayikra 26: 42)" can be explained by the posuk "from hand to hand the evil will not be cleansed (Mishlei 11:21)" - one who does a mitzvah and wishes to take his reward immediately is called evil, because he leaves nothing for his children. So too, if the our forefathers had sought to take the reward of the mitzvos which they did in this world, from where would their offspring have the merit that they need to protect them?

According to this, if one does a mitzvah he should not take the reward for himself, but should leave it for his children who come after him. But if so, what will a person have for himself, how will he survive? The answer is that he will survive from that which Hashem gives him from His own pocket, so to speak. not as a reward but as a free gift.

This is what the posuk is saying: "Hashem will cause you to remain for the good in the fruit of your body", that is, your reward will

remain with you for the good in the fruit of your body, benefiting your offspring with your merit. But for you yourself "Hashem will open for you His good treasury" - He will open His own treasury in order to give you a free gift.



◣ Privileged To Give - Chida

וְהָיָה֙ כִּֽי־תָבֹ֣וא אֶל־הָאָ֔רֶץ... וְלָקַחְתָּ֞ מֵרֵאשִׁ֣ית כָּל־פְּרִ֗י הָאֲדָמָה֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר תָּבִ֔יא מֵאַרְצְךָ֖ אֲשֶׁ֣ר ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵ֣ן לָ֑ךְ - "***When you enter the land... you must take the first of all the fruit of the earth that you will bring from your land that G-d is giving you...***" (26:1-2)

The Gemara (Kiddushin 7) tells us that if someone important accepts a gift, it is as if the important person had given a present to the giver, because of the pleasure the acceptance of the gift affords the giver. The Torah uses the verb "take" in this sense with reference to the offering of the first fruits. It implies that those making the offering thereby "take" or accept from G-d a gift in the form of the pleasure afforded by the privilege of being allowed to offer up the first fruits of their harvest.

"Angels have no evil inclination. Humans do. And by overcoming their evil inclination, humans can rise to a greatness far beyond that of angels." ~ Reb Yehudah Leib "Leibele" Eiger.

◣ Private Time - Rav Tzadok Hakohen

וְהָיָה֙ כִּֽי־תָבֹ֣וא אֶל־הָאָ֔רֶץ... וְלָקַחְתָּ֞ מֵרֵאשִׁ֣ית כָּל־פְּרִ֗י הָאֲדָמָה֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר תָּבִ֔יא מֵאַרְצְךָ֖ אֲשֶׁ֣ר ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵ֣ן לָ֑ךְ - "***When you enter the land… you must take the first of all the fruit of the earth that you will bring from your land that G-d is giving you…***" (26:1-2)

In the entire parshah of Bikkurim (first fruits) and Viduy (confession), we do not find the letter **ס** samech which represents the Satan **סמאל**. This is because this parshah is comparable to a son speaking and pleading with his father. Fortunately, the Satan cannot interfere during such a tender and emotional period of time.

◣ Reason To Rejoice - Radomsker Rebbe

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ֖ בְּכָל־הַטּ֑וֹב אֲשֶׁ֣ר נָתַ֤ן לְךָ֙ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ֔ וּלְבֵיתֶ֖ךָ אַתָּ֣ה וְהַלֵּוִ֑י וְהַגֵּ֕ר אֲשֶׁ֖ר בְּקִרְבֶּֽךָ "***Then, you shall rejoice with all the good that Hashem your G-d has granted you and your household…***" (26:11)

If a man receives a generous gift from a mighty king, he rejoices not so much for its actual value, but more so for the fact that it came from the king himself. The main reason for this joy at the gift is the thought of who the giver is. Therefore, the Torah states: "And you shall rejoice in all the good" not only because it is good but primarily because it is what "Hashem, your G-d, has given you" - just the thought of Who gave it to us should give us great joy!

"In Shema, we are commanded, "place these words [of Torah] <u>on</u> your heart." But shouldn't we be told to place them "<u>in</u>" our hearts? - There will be times when we may not be receptive to the words we learn. Nevertheless, Hashem says to place them on your heart, so the moment your heart opens wide, the words can fall right in!" ~ Kotzker Rebbe, Reb Menachem Mendel (1787-1859)

◣ Spread The Joy - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

עָשִׂיתִי כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנִי - "*I have done all that You commanded me*..." (26:14)

Rashi explains these words to mean, "I was happy and made others happy by it." - The tzaddikim show from here that someone who is appropriately joyful and brings joy to others can truly proclaim, "I have done all that You commanded me." It is Hashem's Will that His children be constantly happy. Someone who brings joy to others, is fulfilling this desire.

◣ This Too Is For The Best - Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקיךָ - "*And you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d*..." (27:7)

Why does the Torah tell us that Bnei Yisrael should eat and rejoice at the site of Mount Eival, the mountain reserved for the admonitions? Would it not be more appropriate to rejoice at Mount Gerizim, where the blessings were uttered?

This teaches us a most powerful lesson: One should realize that when he is visited by difficulties in life, it should not be viewed as a negative situation. Difficulties offer numerous positive effects, to cleanse, to refine, and to bring one to humility.

"Each person is a one-time phenomenon, an occurrence that has never been before and will never be again. You have a unique blend of character traits and personality. You are unique in your particular family constellation, born in a specific time of history and in a specific environment. This uniqueness gives you great importance. Only you can accomplish your unique life tasks." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (1914-2005).



Simcha

In this week's Parsha, we see the great importance of the Midah of Simcha. At the end of the Parsha, we read all of the **קללות**. The Torah explains that the basis for all these curses is **תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלוקך בשמחה**. The reason that all of these bad things are happening to you is because you didn't serve Hashem with Simcha.

How can it be that Simcha is so integral to the service of Hashem to warrant such a punishment?

I once heard from the Mashgiach **Rav Meir Chadash ztz"l**, that when a person is B'Simcha, he is filled with Ruach Chaim, whereas a person who is depressed, finds it very difficult to function, even on a basic level. Rav Meir Chadash was Mechadesh that this is even truer on a spiritual level. A person who has a lack of Simcha finds it very difficult to grow spiritually. On the other hand, when a person is in a state of Simcha, he finds himself able to grow by leaps and bounds.

The Meshech Chochma brings down that a Jew's Simcha is not the same as a Goy's simcha. A Goy's Simcha is limited to the earthly pleasures, whereas a Jew's Simcha is based solely on his connection with his creator. This is the Pshat in the Passuk that we quoted in the beginning **תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלוקך בשמחה**. The Passuk goes on to say **מרב כל** … i.e. we tried to derive our happiness from "Rov Kol", which is the earthly pleasures, but as Jews, we couldn't achieve Simcha through this.

The Simcha of a Jew that we are referring to is portrayed in the week's Parsha in reference to the Mitzvah of Bikurim. **ושמחת בכל**

הטוב אשר נתן ה' אלוקך... – The Passuk refers to Simcha as a result of bringing Bikurim. What is this juxtaposition? When does a person perform the Mitzvah of Bikurim? Only after a person has toiled the entire year with great difficulty, can a person perform this Mitzvah. Yet even so, before he enjoys the fruit of his labor, he must first "offer" his fruits up to Hashem, as if to say, "It is not me who has toiled with my produce, but rather Hashem, who has been beside me the entire time".

The Chinuch says; As we bring the Bikurim we have a very warm feeling that just as Hashem has been with us until now, and he is with us now as well, it is likely that he will continue being with us. Knowing this generates great Simcha and strengthens our Bitachon!

If a Jew feels constantly that Hashem is with him, whether in his exalted moments and his triumphs, or during his difficult moments Vis-à-vis his tribulations, and Hashem is assisting him in overcoming them, this leads a person to true Simcha and security.

The Kotzker Rebbe said that if a person wants to measure where he is holding spiritually, all he has to do is see where he is holding in his level of Simcha. This is the sole litmus test required.

May we be Zoche to strengthen ourselves with this great and crucial Midah of Simcha, and through this, reach exalted levels of spirituality.

Serving Hashem with Joy and Enthusiasm

This week's Parsha contains within it the blessings that will befall the Jewish people if they keep the Torah properly, and the frightening curses that will result in the Jews becoming lax in their Mitzvah observance.

When one looks at the severity of the curses in this week's Parsha, one can't help but feel a certain note of terror when considering what will happen to our nation if we stray from the path of the

Torah. However, there is a strange verse at the end of the list of curses which seems to attempt to explain the rationale behind why the curses are so harsh. The Torah says, "All this will come upon you because you did not serve Hashem out of happiness of spirit."

One can't help but wonder at this seemingly non-commensurate relationship between the crime and the punishment. Although the Jews may perform all the Mitzvos in the Torah, if they don't do them out of happiness, they deserve all the horrific curses delineated in this week's Parsha?!

The truth of the matter is, when one contemplates the factor of joy in Mitzvah observance, one realizes that it is not merely an external accoutrement which enhances our Mitzvah observance, but rather that he performs it out of a deep love for his creator as an integral component of the Mitzvah process itself.

The Rambam in the laws of Teshuva (9:1) adds that all the wonderful things that will ensue in response to Mitzvah observance, such as having Hashem hold our hands during our journey through life, and remove all the stumbling blocks, will only occur if we perform the Mitzvos with great joy and enthusiasm. If we do not have this factor, however, we will not merit this treatment.

They say about the famous Rosh Yeshiva of Be'er Yakov, **R' Shapira Zt"l**, that he used to run to every Davening. When they would listen to him during these daily marathons, they could hear him murmuring to himself, "I am on my way to stand in front of Hashem. and that there is none like Him anywhere!"

Indeed, the **Orchos Tzaddikim** (Gate of Simcha) memorably promises that "a mitzvah performed with simcha merits a thousand-fold reward more than a mitzvah enabled as a burden".

May we all merit to serve Hashem constantly out of great joy and enthusiasm!

מצוות שמחה

This week's Parsha contains perhaps one of the most elusive commandments in the whole Torah, yet one of the most important ones. Many people spend their entire lives searching for it yet never find it. - At the end of all the curses mentioned in the rebuke which Moshe Rabenu gives in the Parsha, the verse says that all these terrible things come upon a person because he didn't serve Hashem out of joy and gladness of the heart.

The **Rabenu Yona** and the **Rambam** explain that even if a person keeps all the Mitzvos properly, if he does not do them out of a genuine happiness, he cannot serve Hashem correctly, and can therefore bring disaster on himself. I would like to attempt to elaborate on why the commandment of Simcha is so integral to a Jew's Torah observance.

Certainly one aspect of the importance of Joy can be seen from the Maharal. The Maharal explains that joy is a fundamental component in motivating a person. Without a basic feeling of enthusiasm, a person is essentially helpless to function normally. Service of Hashem is no exception. If an individual doesn't feel any drive to perform the Mitzvos, he will certainly get burnt out rapidly and eventually abandon his Mitzvah observance altogether.

The Maharal makes a beautiful comparison between the word **אדם** and the word **אדמה**. He says that just as earth which is not tended to will not yield any produce, so to a man who does not have enjoyment in his Mitzvah performance will not be able to bring out his true inner strengths, and will wither and die, whereas if he does have inner satisfaction and gladness, he will blossom in his service of Hashem and reach his full potential.

The great Mussar giant, **R' Moshe Shapira** who is also a linguistic expert in the Hebrew language once added to this Maharal that the word **שמח** and the word **צמח** (sprout forth) are the same word as a "**ש**" is interchangeable with a "**צ**". It is clear from these titans how

important it is to develop one's feeling of delight in his Torah observance and service of Hashem.

R' Zadok Hakohen goes so far as to say that a person's entire spiritual status can be summed up by evaluating the joy he feels during the performance of a Mitzvah. The level of gusto and enthusiasm seen can allow us to determine exactly where a person is holding in terms of his service of Hashem. It is well known that the **Ari Z"l** said about himself that any level which he reached in his service could be attributed solely to the passion he felt about the Mitzvos.

The **Maharitz Chiyus** says that the only way to be happy is if a person is able to see the blessings in his life.

R' Avidgor Miller was once approached by a man who complained that the city of New York was too polluted, and it was making him very upset. R' Avigdor tried to calm the man but later went home and submersed his head in a sink full of water. His shocked grandson, who was home at the time, and thought that his grandfather had lost his mind and said "Zayde, what are you doing"?

R' Avidgor responded, "I was worried that this person's complaints had had some effect on me, and I wouldn't be thankful enough for Hashem's blessings, so I put my head in a place where I couldn't breathe, and when I came up, I was so appreciative for the simple blessing of air, and that I felt incapable of complaining about anything".

The **Ohr Sameach** on the above quoted verse proves this exact point. The verse says, "These curses came upon you because you didn't serve Hashem out of joy, and gladness of the heart <u>when you had everything</u>". Most people understand this to mean that because you didn't perform the Mitzvos when your life was going great, all of those blessings you didn't utilize will be confiscated. But the Ohr Sameach explains with great novelty that the verse is teaching us the secret to happiness. The reason you weren't able to serve

Hashem out of enjoyment is *because* you were always looking for "**רב כל**" – everything, whereas had you taken the approach of the Torah – to be happy with the blessings you *did* have, and recognize the source of those blessings, you would have been much more content, and thereby able to keep the Torah out of true simcha.

If we take this lesson to heart, we can increase the joy in our lives by many fold today, without much effort, and achieve what many people spend a lifetime searching for!

May we all merit to reach and maintain a state of service of Hashem with true inner joy!

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - Every Jew Is Precious

Rav Aharon Toisig, a renowned rav from Bnei Brak, relates the following story:

My brother, Reb Yaakov zt"l lived in Be'er Sheva for many years. One year, on our father's yahrtzeit, he went to shul and wanted to be the chazzan for Minchah for our father's neshamah. But when he arrived in shul, he found that they had only nine men for the minyan. My brother went outside looking for a tenth man, but the streets were empty.

Suddenly, he noticed a young man who clearly wasn't religious walking down the street. He had long shaggy hair and was wearing jeans. My brother debated whether he should ask him to join the minyan, and in the end decided to try.

He went up to the young man and asked politely, "Would you be able to join our minyan?" - The young man didn't understand what my brother even wanted from him.

"We need ten men to be able to pray. We have only nine. If you join us, we'll have a minyan."

"Sorry, I'm not interested," the young man said.

But my brother persisted and tried to appeal to his sense of kindness. "Please, today is the anniversary of my father's passing, and every tefillah and Kaddish will be an elevation for his neshamah. If you join us, this will be to your merit."

"But I don't know how to daven," the young man said hesitantly. "That's okay," my brother reassured him. "I'll show you what to say." "But I don't keep mitzvos. Will G-d even listen to my prayers?"

My brother gazed at him with compassion and said, "You should know that every Jew has a lofty soul that was carved from underneath the throne of glory itself. Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the prayers of every Jew. Every tefillah is beloved in Heaven. Yours, too."

The words pierced the young man's heart, and his eyes glistened with emotion. He slowly followed my brother into the shul, and someone handed him a yarmulke and a siddur. My brother showed him what to say, and the davening began.

The young man davened from the siddur, feeling a little embarrassed, but he remained until the end of the tefillah. When davening was over, my brother went over to the young man, shook his hand warmly, and thanked him profusely for the huge favor he had done for him.

Fourteen years later, my brother entered the main supermarket in Geulah when he noticed an avreich with long peyos, his children at his side. The avreich looked at him and said, "Do you remember me?" "I'm sorry, I don't," my brother said.

"Do you remember how one time you were looking for a tenth man for a minyan on your father's yahrtzeit, and you found a young man with long hair and jeans to join your minyan?"

"Yes...."

"That was me. I was that young man!"

My brother almost fainted on the spot. He had never dreamed that the young man who had joined his minyan, who had been so remote from Torah, would one day be standing in front of him as a frum man with children of his own.

"You should know," the avreich said, "that you played a big part in the changes I made in my life. When I left that shul, I couldn't get the words you said to me out of my head: Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the prayers of every Jew. Every tefillah is beloved in Heaven. Yours, too."

"I knew you weren't just saying that. If you thought I could be part of a minyan that was for a zechus for your father's neshamah, that proved that my tefillah was beloved, too. When I got home, I told my wife what happened. I told her that what you said changed my perspective of chareidim and Judaism. You opened the door. From then onward, I began to take an interest in Judaism.

"A short while later we had started learning concepts in Judaism, started to keep Shabbos, kashered our kitchen, and I started attending Torah shiurim. At one point my wife and I decided to transfer our children to chareidi schools.

"Fourteen years have passed since I started that journey, and today I spend my days sitting and learning. Our home is infused with Torah, and my children are all sincere ovdei Hashem."

This is the impact a good word can have on a person distant from Yiddishkeit. The right words can light up a soul and bring it out of the darkness.

By the way, my brother never told us this story, humbly keeping it to himself. It was only after he passed away that we found out about the impact he had on this young man.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



• Attaining True Bitachon

In Parshas Ki Savo we read about the mitzvah of *bikurim;* it was a scene to behold — our forefathers would gather together from all corners of Eretz Yisroel and bring the first ripe fruits of their fields to the Beis Hamikdash as an expression of thanksgiving to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Now, included in this mitzvah was a certain formula, a declaration of gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that the farmer would make upon his arrival in the *azarah* and it's going to be some of these *pessukim* in the Torah that we will attempt to study now.

Among other things, the farmer expressed his gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for saving the Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim and he said as follows: **וַנִּצְעַק אֶל ה' אֱלֹקֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קֹלֵנוּ ... וַיּוֹצִאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם ... וַיְבִאֵנוּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה** … — "We cried out to You Hashem … and You took us out of Mitzrayim … and brought us to this place" (Ki Savo 26:8-9). He's describing there how Hakodosh Boruch Hu had kept His promise to us by saving us from slavery in Mitzrayim.

But we note something queer in the *pessukim*: "We cried out to You and You took us out." It seems like that's the reason Hakodosh Boruch Hu took us out but that's a big question. What's this business

about crying out? And if they didn't cry out? Wasn't it a promise made to Avrohom and Yitzchok and Yaakov — each one separately — that Hakodosh Boruch Hu would take their children out of Mitzrayim? It was a *bris!* The farmer himself says it: **הַגַּדְתִּי הַיּוֹם לְהַשֵּׁם אֱלֹקֶיךָ כִּי בָאתִי אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע הַשֵּׁם לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ לָתֵת לָנוּ** — *I declare today to Hashem that I've come into the land that He swore to our fathers to give to us"* (ibid. 3) He gave his word to the Avos. Isn't that enough?

- **The Dealbreaker**

And the answer is, no, it's not enough. There's another element required for a nation that's going to be taken out of Mitzrayim and that's crying out. And we're going to learn now that it wasn't just another thing — it was *everything!* It was *only* because the Bnei Yisroel cried out that they were taken out of Mitzrayim. Despite the covenant, despite the oath that had to be fulfilled — it's the word of Hashem after all so there's no way that it wouldn't come true sooner or later — despite all that, Hakodosh Boruch Hu waited until He heard their outcry. The outcry was what sealed the deal.

And not just one outcry; they cried out for a long time. It's repeated again and again: "I have heard their crying out" (Shemos 3:7), "Their crying out has come before Me" (ibid. 3:9), "I have heard the groaning outcry of Bnei Yisroel" (ibid. 6:5). Only when He heard enough outcries from them, it was only then that finally Hakodosh Boruch Hu decided to fulfill His covenant with them.

- **Large-Scale Groaning**

Now, we think that this one groaned on his own, and that one groaned on his own; that they cried out privately. Each time something happened they cried out. No, that's a big error. Of course that too, but you don't understand the ways of our forefathers. It was organized groaning! They *came together to groan.* That's what they did. Whenever they had an opportunity they gathered together and they shouted "**אָנָּא הַשֵּׁם הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא** – Hashem, please save us."

But not like I say it, "*ana Hashem,*" quietly. They raised the roof! That's how our forefathers did it; that's the old — I won't say Jewish way — it was the old Israelite way to shout "*mikiros libam", from the walls of their heart* (Yirmiyah 4:19) They shouted to make Hakodosh Boruch Hu listen.

- **Minimal Groaning**

Now that seems queer to our 'sophisticated' ears; when we pray we wouldn't shout to tear the skies open. We understand that Hashem hears even a whisper and so we don't do such things — we're too cultured for that.

Not only do we not shout but we don't pray excessively either. You know there are a lot of people here who are nice people and they don't like to burden Hashem too much. They'll ask, they'll say the prayers, but they won't go overboard. Quietly, they'll mention something, "I need *parnossah*," or "I want good health." But to importune Him and to be bothersome, to raise their voices and call out to Him, that they wouldn't do. They won't pester Him like that. They remind Him once in a while to keep them in mind and that's all.

- **Yell Under The El**

But that's very far from the way of our forefathers. You think they were standing there saying a formal prayer? **יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ**, or something like that from the *siddur* and they got through with it and that's all. No! That's not how they prayed. They were tearing the skies apart with their prayers, **אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ אֶלָּא אָתָּה** – *We have no king except for You!* Not Pharaoh, not Moshe Rabeinu, nobody is going to take us out of here except for You! I cannot describe what took place there but you can be sure it was the most pathetic scene. I'm sure they were hysterical! *Vanitzaak!* And we cried out!

Try that one time. You're walking in the street and there's a lot of noise from the traffic — maybe you're walking under the El (the elevated train tracks) and there's a train overhead making a

tremendous racket. Nobody's standing next to you, no one can hear you now, so open your mouth and shout at the top of your voice, "*I have no king except for You!*"

You never did it before? What are you waiting for? Try it once in a while. Cry out to him for something! For what? For a *shidduch,* for children, for health — there are thousands of things you need. You don't need anything? It's impossible but let's say you have a thick head; so cry out for other people who are suffering. That's the way to *daven* — you're *shouting* because you're all in!

- **The Tzadik's Father**

There was once a *tzadik* in Galicia, Reb Dovid Lelover, and he was a *tzadik* since he was a little baby; as a little child he was already a *tzadik.* But I'm not talking about him now — I want to tell you about his father.

The *chachomim,* the sages, once came and asked his mother — it was after his father died already — so they came to his mother and asked her, "How did it happen that your child was born a *kadosh me'rechem?*" He was a *kadosh* when he was a little baby!

How did you merit such a thing? Maybe your husband — that's the father of Reb Dovid — maybe he was a big *tzadik*?"

"No," she said, "he was a plain man."

But the sages wouldn't let up. "Can't you recall anything about him? Something! Tell us something that was exceptional."

- **Crying on Shabbos**

But she insisted. "There was nothing exceptional," she said. "He was a plain man. Only one thing I do remember. I recall that he used to walk around the table praying for a son on Shabbos. When they used to come to the words — in one of the *zemiros* they say **וְיִזְכּוּ לִרְאוֹת בָּנִים וּבְנֵי בָנִים עוֹסְקִים בַּתּוֹרָה וּבַמִּצְוֹת**; it's a *tefilah* that we should be worthy of having children who study Torah and do mitzvos — so he

used to sing it again and again, and each time he became more and more excited.

"And then he began to cry out and shout and the end was that he was banging his head against a wall. He was crying out to Hashem! And he banged his head so much against the wall he used to faint!

"That's what I remember," she told them. At that time it seemed like he was an extremist, to be so excited about *tefillah*, but that's what happened. That was a "plain Jew" in ancient times.

- **Ready for Redemption**

And so our Avos in Mitzrayim banged their heads against the wall. I can't tell you exactly what they did, but you can be sure they were extreme. They were tearing their hearts out and asking to be saved from the wicked Egyptians, from the whips and the bricks and the servitude. And that's why they finally came out of Mitzrayim.

But I want to tell you something now, something that you probably didn't know. Hakodosh Boruch Hu didn't take them out because they were crying. It's not that they cried so He had *rachmonus* on His people. Oh no! Of course that too, but it was much more than that — it was because by means of all of their calling out they became new people. As much as they trusted in Hashem before, it was increased now a hundred fold, a thousand fold. They became tremendous *baalei bitachon.*

They cried out with such fervor, with such intensity, with such a loud voice, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu saw that they trusted in Him and now they were ready to be His people — they were ready to be redeemed from Mitzrayim and to brought to Har Sinai to receive the Torah. "If you trust in Me so strongly," said Hashem, "so you're ready now for Matan Torah."

- **Trust and Learn**

It's something we say every day in our davening but most people don't realize what they're saying. In *Ahava Rabah* we say: **אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ**

— *Our Father our King,* **בַּעֲבוּר אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁבָּטְחוּ בְּךָ** — *for the sake of our fathers who had trust in you,* **וַתְּלַמְּדֵם חֻקֵּי חַיִּים** — *and You taught them the statutes of life, the laws of life.* It means *because* our forefathers trusted in you, *that's* why you chose to take them out of Mitzrayim and bring them to Har Sinai to become the eternal Torah people.

That's what Yetzias Mitzrayim was after all. The deliverance from Egypt we must understand was not only for the purpose of our becoming a free people. It certainly wasn't merely to rescue us from oppression, or to punish Pharaoh and our tormentors. It was for a much bigger purpose than that. Yetzias Mitzrayim is the preface to the giving of the Torah.

And how did all of that begin? What was the catalyst for this great and eternal career? It was because of **אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁבָּטְחוּ בְּךָ** — *our fathers who had trust in you,* **וַתְּלַמְּדֵם חֻקֵּי חַיִּים** — *that You chose to bring them out of Mitzrayim and teach them the statutes of life at Har Sinai.*

Now that seems like a new thing to us. When you ask, "What caused our Forefathers to be worthy of **אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ**, of being chosen?" We wouldn't have imagined that it was because they cried out when they were distressed. But that's what we're hearing now. That's the meaning of **בַּעֲבוּר אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁבָּטְחוּ בְּךָ** — *our forefathers trusted in You.* It's because they cried out to You with all their hearts, again and again, that's what perfected them and made them ready for Yetzias Mitzrayim and Kabolas Hatorah.

"The greatest kindness you can do for someone is to believe in them even after they have stopped believing in themselves." ~ Reb Elazar of Lizhensk (1742-1806).

The Sad Guy at the Restaurant – Rabbi Shlomo Landau

Many years ago, a group of yeshiva bochurim walked into a restaurant in New York. They placed their order and they began to look for a table to sit down at. One of the boys called Shlomo turns to the rest of them and says, "Let's sit at that table." It was a table where a middle-aged fellow was already sitting.

"Come, let's sit with this guy."

His friend's said, "that table is already occupied."

He said, "Trust me."

He said to the man, "Would it be ok if we sit with you?"

He said, "You can sit here if you want."

This fellow looked sad and depressed, and it bothered Shlomo. He figured that if a group of vibrant and energetic bochurim would sit with him, maybe it would cheer the guy up.

At some point, Shlomo leans across the table, and he looks the fellow in the eye, and says, "What's wrong – you seem so sad."

In a moment of vulnerability, the fellow confides in him, and says, "I'll tell you the truth, I have a factory job, and I work really hard to support my family, and today I was let go. I was fired, and I can't bring myself to go home and tell my wife that we no longer have a source of income." - Shlomo sympathized with the fellow and tried to cheer him up.

After sitting there for 15-20 minutes, the fellow says to Shlomo, "I feel a lot better about myself now, I think I'm going to be able to go home now and tell my wife, and hopefully, things are going to be ok."

That story was all but forgotten.

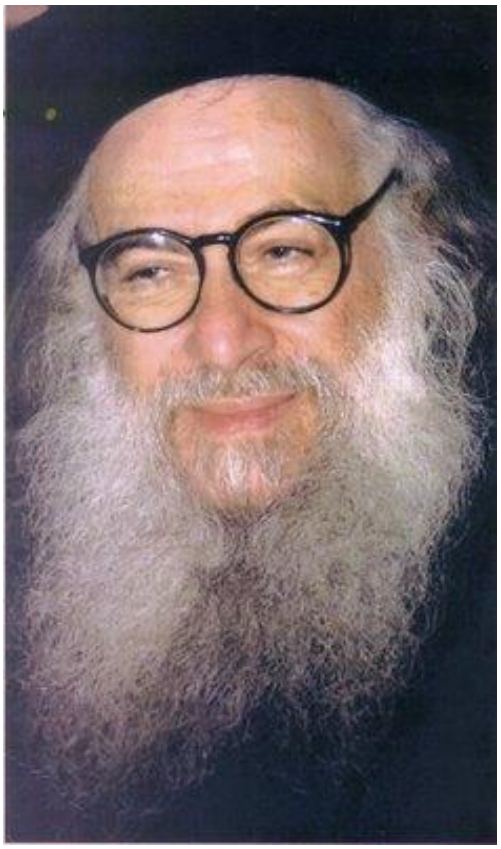
Fast forward many years later. That bachur, that young man Shlomo, was now the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Sh'or Yoshuv in Far Rockaway, Queens - **Rav Shlomo Freifeld zt"l**.

Rav Shlomo received a letter in the mail.

The letter says, "Hi, you probably don't remember me, but many years ago you sat down at my table in a restaurant. Now I've been following your progress, and I've seen your rise and success in your career. And I want you to know something, - I'm so happy for you, because your students deserve somebody like you. Here is a small token of my gratitude, Hashem has been kind to me."

And in the envelope was a very large cheque for his yeshiva.

Rav Shlomo Freifeld zt"l הרב שלמה פרייפלד זצ"ל Tishrei 17 5751 Rosh Yeshiva Sh'or Yoshuv



Rav Shlomo Freifeld *ztz"l*, the son of an immigrant shoe salesman, grew up in East New York in the days before a yeshivah education was recognized as the right of every Jewish child. His parents planned to send him to public school, but when they were told that in Yeshiva Toras Chaim their son would be occupied and supervised into the late afternoon, while his parents worked, they opted to send him there.

Later on, as a student at Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, a powerful, lifelong bond was formed between Shlomo and the *rosh yeshivah*, **Rav Yitzchok Hutner *ztz"l***. "He taught me everything I know," Rav Shlomo used to say. Rav Hutner returned his student's affection, drawing him close and singling him out for important charges, such as representing his Rebbi in the founding of P'eylim, the organization devoted to rescuing Jewish children who'd been placed in anti-religious institutions in the early years of Israeli independence.

Rav Shlomo relocated to Far Rockaway along with Rav Hutner, where Rav Shlomo served as the principal of Chaim Berlin. When the yeshivah moved to Brooklyn, though, Rav Shlomo remained in Far Rockaway. It was time to strike out on his own and build an institution in his own distinctive mold.

He was the founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Shor Yoshuv in Far Rockaway, NY, which was one of the first *yeshivos* to have a program for *Baalei Teshuva* . Sh'or Yoshuv became a magnet for thinking Jews of all stripes. There, *talmidei chachamim* toiled alongside disenchanted youth who had never learned to read Hebrew. Products of mainstream yeshivos *shteiged* alongside long-haired newcomers. All were united by the drive to uncover truth — and by the force of their Rebbi's personality. Despite Rav Shlomo's brilliance, he was able to meet a *talmid* on his own level. Indeed, many beginners were taught the very basics of learning.

"It wasn't about quantity, but about mastery. He would tell his students, after they had completed one *daf*, that the next *daf* wasn't harder, just different. Once they had learned one *daf*, they could conquer all of Shas."

Long before the *baal teshuvah* movement existed, Rav Shlomo was drawing lost souls close to Torah with his fiery love for them and for Yiddishkeit. "He didn't impact people through fear — he impacted them through love, humor, and acceptance." - At a time when everyone around him expected labels and categories, Rav Shlomo saw the whole person.

Rav Shlomo Freifeld, zt'l, once asked someone, "Do you know why the 1960s produced a plethora of *baalei teshuva*? Because in the 1960s a number of people became vegetarians. When this happened, they stopped consuming non-kosher foods, the *timtum ha'lev* [blockage of the heart] stopped, and they were open to true spiritual growth."



"Do you learn?" "Whenever I have time"

This week's parsha contains the terrible Tochacha – the 98 curses delineated in graphic detail, through which the Almighty warns us of what we will be subject to if we do not keep His Torah. Before the Tochacha begins, the Torah provides some "good news". Namely, "If you will keep all my commandments then you will have abundant blessing…" [Devarim 28:1-14]

Immediately following the "good news", the Torah launches into a description of what will happen "If we do not listen to the commandments of the L-rd our G-d…" The curses contain the mirror image of the blessings. Rather than being "blessed in the city and blessed in the country, blessed in our coming in and blessed in our going out" we will be "cursed in the city and cursed in the country, cursed in our going in and cursed in our going out".

The Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel translates the pasuk "Cursed will you be when you come in and cursed will you be when you go out" [28:19] as follows: "You will be cursed when you come in" means "you will be cursed when you come into the theaters and when you come into the circuses – because you wasted your time on frivolous entertainment rather than spending it learning Torah." "You will be cursed when you go out" as "you will be cursed when you go out to make a living".

Rav Pam asks, what is wrong with making a living? A Jew needs to support his family and earn a living. This is implicit in the pasuk "and you shall gather in your produce" [Devarim 11:14].

We can understand the curse associated with lewd or inappropriate forms of entertainment, but what is the meaning of the curse associated with one's trying to earn a living?

Rav Pam said that there is nothing wrong with earning a living and that earning a living is not in and of itself 'bitul Torah', because one is obligated to support a family. However, people do not work 16 hours a day. What does he do with his leisure time? If he spends his free time learning, spending time with his family, and helping around the house, that demonstrates that he only spent time working because he was forced to do so. However, if learning or attending a shiur is on the bottom of the totem pole, it proves that the time at work was also not just because he had to, but was because he would rather be doing anything other than learning. He will find any excuse not to learn.

It is about such a person that we say "Cursed are you when you come in (to the theaters and circuses) and cursed are you when you go out (even to earn your living)". A person must earn a living. However, he must have the attitude that whenever I have the opportunity to do so, I want to use my time wisely from a spiritual perspective.

Rav Henkin, zt"l, once met the **Chazon Ish** when they were both yet in Europe. At the time, he did not even know the Chazon Ish and he certainly did not realize his greatness. They were both coincidentally in the parlor of a certain Rabbi, waiting to see the Rav and began talking with one another.

Rav Henkin asked the Chazon Ish "What's your name?" and he replied "My name is Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz."

"What do you do?" inquired Rav Henkin.

"I own a store", replied Rav Karelitz. (This was true because the Chazon Ish's wife ran a store and that is how he earned a living."

Rav Henkin then asked, "Do you set aside fixed times for learning Torah daily?"

The Chazon Ish responded, "When I have time I learn."

Later, when Rav Henkin got in to see the Rav who he was waiting to talk to, the Rabbi told him that he was about to leave his position

for several months and travel to Russia. He was planning on leaving his community in the interim with the gentleman in the parlor named Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, who was proficient in all areas of Talmud."

What the Chazon Ish told Rav Henkin was true. Whenever he had time, he learned! That is why he became the Chazon Ish.



Interpretation of *V'Heeseegucha*

A pasuk in this week's parsha: Perek 28 in Devorim begins with the words: "It shall be that if you listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, to keep, to perform all of His commandments that I command you this day, then Hashem, your G-d, will make you supreme over all the nations of the earth." [Devarim 28:1]

That is the good news. If we keep the mitzvos, the Master of the Universe will elevate us above all the nations of the world.

The next *pasuk* continues: **וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל־הַבְּרָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהִשִּׂיגֻךָ** - "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you, if you listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d." [Devarim 28:2].

Many times, we have tried to understand exactly what the word "*v'heeseegucha*" means. The preceding expression that "all these blessings will come upon you" seems to be sufficient. That statement should stand by itself. It is not clear what the extra verb "*v'heeseegucha*" (literally – they will catch up to you) is trying to add.

Interpretation by **Rav Tzadok HaKohen:**

Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin writes in the name of the **Rebbe Reb Bunim of Peshischa** that the expression "and the blessings will come upon you *v'heeseegoocha*" means that the blessings should reach you **where you are**. This means that the blessings should not change you. The *Brochos* that you receive will reach you "where you are" and you will not become a different person because of them.

All too often, we see that when someone comes into a lot of success and a lot of money, it changes him. He becomes a different person. Fame and fortune can do that. The promise is – according to Rav Tzadok — that the blessings should reach you and cause you to remain exactly where you were before they arrived.

Virtually the same language is used by the curses 13 *pesukim* later:

וְהָיָה אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמַע... וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל־הַקְּלָלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהִשִּׂיגוּךָ - "And if you do not hearken to the voice of the Hashem your G-d to observe and keep all His commandments and statutes that I command you this day, then all these curses *v'heeseegoocha* [will overtake you]" [Devarim 28:15].

Just like good things sometimes change a person, so too bad things can change a person. If, unfortunately, a person needs to suffer curses, he should not need to change because of that either.

A Person Must Find Pleasure In Mitzvos

In the middle of the terrible string of curses in this week's parsha, the pasuk says, "Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with gladness and with goodness of heart, out of an abundance of everything." [Devorim 28:47] The Torah is teaching that in some way, the Tochacha (punitive chastisement) resulted from a failure to joyfully perform the mitzvos.

The difficulty with this statement is obvious. The Tochacha is a horrific litany of calamities. When Rashi and the commentaries wrote their insights into the pasukim describing the terrible punishments set out in this parsha, it was as a prediction of what could happen in the future. Unfortunately, we know that everything spelled out in these pasukim actually transpired. The pasukim are not exaggerations. They happened as literally as they were written.

The question is — did these punishments really occur merely because we did not have appropriate joy and enthusiasm for keeping G-

d's mitzvos? Could it be true that despite the fact that we actually kept all the mitzvos, we were punished for our attitude alone?

Rav Simche Zissel Ziv, "the Alter of Kelm," (1824-1898) suggests that the Tochacha did not occur because people did not have the proper joy in fulfilling mitzvos. It came about because they stopped fulfilling mitzvos – period! So why does the pasuk attribute the Tochacha to a failure to fulfill mitzvos joyously? The Alter of Kelm explains this based on human nature.

People do not do things that they do not enjoy. People need an incentive to do things. Sometimes the incentive is financial. Sometimes the incentive is based on physical pleasure. Sometimes the incentive is emotional. There must be some benefit from an activity or we will not continue to do it.

A person who views the life of Torah and mitzvos as a tremendous goal and tremendous benefit, rather than as a burden, will obviously continue learning Torah and performing mitzvos. Of course, there are times in every person's life when his interest in something may wax or wane. But as long as the general feeling towards Torah and mitzvos is that "this is what it is all about," they will give him pleasure and ultimately give him a purpose in life. When that is the case, he will continue to do them. When that is not the case, Torah and mitzvos may become rote and mundane. They then become a burden. When that happens the person may eventually stop doing them entirely. The result of ceasing to do mitzvos is the Tochacha.

If there is one thing we as parents must try to give over to our children, it is the aesthetic beauty and pleasure of mitzvos. If we can transmit the pleasure of being an honest religious Jew, of properly observing Shabbos, of a Succah experience, of a family Seder, of doing any mitzvah, to the next generation, then we can feel confident that they will cherish those experiences for the rest of their lives.

Gratitude — A Key Torah Principle

Ki Savo contains the mitzvah of bringing the First Fruits (Bikkurim) to the Bais HaMikdash. The fruits are brought to the Kohen and their presentation is accompanied by a declaration [Devorim 26:5-10] expressing one's gratitude to the Almighty in the context of a brief history of the Jewish people.

The Alshich is bothered by a Medrash in Parshas Bereishis. The Medrash states that the world was created for the sake of that which is called "Reishis" [first]: The world was created for the sake of the nation of Israel who is called "Reishis". Likewise, the world was created for the sake of Torah, which is called "Reishis". Finally, the world was created for the sake of the Mitzvah of Bikkurim, which is called "Reishis".

The Alshich remarks that Bikkurim would not seem to be in anyone's list of the "top 3 mitzvos" and yet here this Medrash states that the world was created for the sake of this mitzvah! What is the meaning of this Medrash?

The Alshich answers that the mitzvah of Bikkurim contains within it something that is fundamental to being a human being — the obligation for people to express their gratitude and hakaras haTov. HaKaras haTov is so basic and primary that the whole world's creation was actualized just for this mitzvah, which teaches us and trains us in the attribute of gratitude.

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer [Chapter 7] writes, "There is nothing harder for the Almighty to live with (as it were) than an ungrateful person.

The Medrash says that our ancestors in the Midbar also angered G-d with their failure to recognize His Goodness towards them. They bemoaned the loss of the "good old days" in Egypt when they had melons, cucumbers, and garlic, and complained about the Mann.

The Medrash equates the sin of ingratitude with fundamental theological denial (kefira b'Ikar) of the Almighty. One who is

ungrateful towards his fellow man is ultimately ungrateful towards the Almighty as well. One who is an ingrate to his boss, his friends, his spouse, his parents, and his neighbor will eventually come to deny the favors of the Almighty.

There are many stories about Gedolim. There are stories about their diligence in study; there are stories about their fear of Heaven; there are stories about their interpersonal kindness; there are stories about their sterling human character traits. These stories are all true in general (although each story about each particular Gadol may or may not be 100 percent accurate). However, regarding one attribute, we hear repeatedly how particularly careful the great men of Israel were about the attribute of HaKaras haTov.

If I look back to back to my days in Yeshiva and would be asked to summarize the themes that **Rav Ruderman zt"l** emphasized the most, number one would certainly be Torah learning but number 2 or 3 would have to be showing proper gratitude (being a "makir tova").

Rav Hutner used to conduct his Pessach Seder in a very serious mood. He treated it as a Divine Service and there was no levity or light-headedness whatsoever. The atmosphere was like Yom Kippur. One year they had a guest who was somewhat of a jokester. He kibitzed, he joked around, and he acted more as if it was Purim than Yom KiPurim.

Rav Shlomo Freifeld was a student of Rav Hutner and said that something had to be done about this fellow. He asked Rav Hutner for permission to throw the fellow out of the house. Rav Hutner said "No. This young man is a nephew of the **Alter from Slabodka**. If he wants to, he can dance on the table, don't touch him!" (Rav Hutner in his youth had been a student of the Alter from Slabodka.)

That is how fundamental Hakaras HaTov is. A person is only considered a "person" i.e. a mentsch when he appreciates all the many favors that the Almighty does for each one of us. No matter

what the state of our life is, we are so indebted to the Ribono shel Olam for life itself.

This is fundamental to being a human being and that is why Bikkurim, which is called 'Reishis', ranks up there with "for the sake of Torah, which is called 'Reishis' and for the sake of Israel, which is called 'Reishis'."

The Vilna Gaon makes a very interesting comment in Sefer Yehoshua, from which we see the precision with which the Gaon learned a *pasuk* in Torah.

We think of *HaKaras HaTov* as a very fundamental human attribute – if someone does not possess it, he is fundamentally flawed in his humanity. The Gaon understands the matter as more than just a human attribute—it is literally a Torah obligation!

It's a Mitzvah to be Happy

This week's parsha contains the mitzvah of bringing one's first fruits (Bikurim) to Jerusalem. The farmer must thank G-d for the bounty with which he has been graced. In addition to the declaration, the Torah commands the farmer to rejoice: "You shall be glad with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you and your household…" [Devarim 26:11]

Rav Mordechai Gifter (1916-2001) asks, why it was necessary for the Torah to add the command for the farmer to be happy? The farmer has just had a bountiful harvest and has arrived in Jerusalem loaded down with first fruits. He already feels terrific. So why must the Torah specify a new positive command — be happy with all that G-d gave you?

Rav Gifter explains that this command is necessary. A person could come up to Jerusalem with a bounty of Bikurim and still be thinking to himself "it could have been better!" He could be jealously looking at his neighbor's fruits and thinking, "he had a better crop than I

did". Unfortunately, one can be blessed with the biggest bounty and yet choose not to be happy. Therefore, as part of the mitzvah of Bikurim, The Torah commands that we should be appreciative. We must look at what we have and be happy about what we have.

We must be happy with what we have even if it COULD have been better and even if our neighbor DID have a better crop. If G-d has seen fit to bless us with this, then we must be happy with it.

The Basket Too Has Holiness

The parsha begins with the mitzvah of 'Hava'as Bikkurim.' There is a positive Torah commandment for a person to bring his First Fruits up to the Bais HaMikdash in Yerushalayim. He presents the First Fruits to the Kohen and recites a special text.

The Mishneh in Tractate Bikkurim describes in great detail the tremendous procession of the people who would come up to Yerushalayim with their first fruits in their baskets or trays. The Torah writes [Devorim 26:4] "And the Kohen will take the vessel from your hand and leave it before the altar of the L-rd your G-d." On this pasuk, the **Sifrei** comments that the Bikkurim required delivery in a "vessel". The Mishneh notes that the "vessel" of rich individuals would be trays of silver or gold while the "vessel" of the poor people would be reed or wicker baskets. Furthermore, the Sifrei writes, the reed or wicker baskets would be given to the Kohanim (to keep) "in order to bring merit to the poor people."

[There are two textual readings of the Sifrei. One is "L'zakos matanah l'kohanim" — in order to give the gift to the priests. The other reading, which the Malbim says is the correct reading, is "L'zakos l'anyiim" — to bring merit to the poor people."]

The Gemara in Bava Kama [92a] comments that the gold and silver trays which were used as delivery vessels by the rich, were returned to them. However, ironically, the reed or wicker baskets, in which

the fruits of the poor were delivered, were kept by the Kohanim. The Gemara cites this as an example of the principle that "poverty follows the poor".

Why in fact was this done? The last thing one could accuse the Torah of is being insensitive to the needs of the poor! Why then does the Torah sanction returning the trays of the rich and keeping the baskets of the poor?

The Malbim offers the following interpretation. The reason why we do not return the baskets to the poor people is — as the Sifrei itself comments — "to bring merit to the poor." It is a privilege for the poor person that the Kohen keeps his basket. Where does he get his basket? He collects the reeds by hand and manually weaves them into a basket. Not only are the Bikkurim the fruits of his labor, even the basket itself has personal importance because it is made with his own sweat and toil.

The rich person, who can afford gold and silver, did not work personally to mine and shape these metals. He simply bought a gold tray. In the case of the wealthy, there was absolutely no holiness to the tray, because it did not represent his labor. In the case of the poor, however, even the basket has certain holiness to it by virtue of the poor person's toil. Therefore, the basket becomes part of the Matnos Kehuna. Giving up the basket is not an embarrassment for the poor person. It is a privilege. It is making a statement that the Torah greatly appreciates his effort and his toil.

This is the intent of the words of the Sifrei — "the basket of the poor is kept to bring merit to the poor person."

"Just as you would bandage a physical wound, so must you tend to emotional pain — with delicate care and gentle patience." ~ Reb Moshe of Kobrin (1784-1858)

The Gaon's Fear of Speaking Lashon HaRah

Among the list of "*Aruruim*" (curses) mentioned in the parsha is someone who smites his fellow man in secret [Devorim 27:24]. How does someone hit his friend "secretly"? Rashi says the reference is to *Lashon HaRah*. Speaking gossip about one's fellow man behind his back can cause him untold damage. His business can be ruined, his marital prospects can be ruined, his life can be ruined. This is known as "*Makeh es Ray'ei'hu b'Saser*."

I recently came across an amazing story in a *sefer* on Chumash by Rav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, who cites an incident which I would like to share, about Lashon HaRah.

This incident has a pedigree which testifies to its veracity:

The Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933) wrote the story in the Kisvei Chofetz Chaim. He heard it from Rav Yehoshua Heller, the Choshen Yehoshua (1814-1880), who heard it from his Rebbe, the Nachlas Dovid (Rav Dovid Tebel) (1794-1861), who heard it from Rav Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821), who heard it from the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797). - This is not just a "Bubba ma'aseh" – this is a ma'aseh with documented yichus!

The Gaon was going somewhere and hired a wagon driver. The wagon driver was driving the horse and buggy. The driver fell asleep. Today, when someone falls asleep at the wheel, the consequences are likely to be fatal. What happened then? The driver fell asleep, so the horse drifted off to the side of the road and started eating some of the produce that was growing in the field on the side of the road.

The non-Jewish owner of the field saw the horse of a Jewish wagon driver helping itself to supper at this Gentile's expense and he became all angry. He ran over to the wagon and saw one person sleeping and one person studying out of a book. He figured the person who was sleeping was the passenger and the person who was up reading the book was the driver. In other words, he assumed that

the *Gaon* of Vilna was the *Ba'al Ha'Agalah* who owned this horse. The farmer beat him up. He physically let him have it.

Somebody asked the Gaon – "Why didn't you say something? You should have protested – 'It is not me who is at fault. It is this other person!'" The Gaon answered, "I did not say that because it would have been *Lashon HaRah*." He went on to add "And if I would have said *Lashon HaRah*, all the Torah that I have written in my life would not save me, and I would come back to this world in a *gilgul* (transmigration of the souls) as a barking dog!"

This story needs to give us a lot of pause. Cursed be he who smites his fellow in secret. Such was the fear the *Gaon* had from something which might not even have been *Lashon HaRah*.

The Tochacha

Rav Yisrael Dovid Grossman, the Rav of Kiryat Migdal haEmek in Northern Israel was visited by a fellow named Moti Dotan, who is the head of the Lower Galilee regional council. Moti Dotan was in Germany to celebrate a "Sister City" arrangement with Hanover, Germany. While there, he was approached by a German who related the following story.

The German had a father who was quite old. On his death bed, he confessed his own part in the Holocaust to his son. He explained that since there are many holocaust deniers, he wanted his son to know that it was true and to tell him some of what happened.

The father told the son that he had been an officer in the German Air Force in World War II and handed him an envelope that contained a wallet made out of parchment which contained within it the officer's military ID certificate. The father explained that while destroying a synagogue, he had found a scroll made of parchment. He cut out a piece of the parchment from the Sefer Torah to make the wallet. He later discovered that such

scrolls were very holy to the Jews. He told his son to give it to the first Jew he meets and to have it brought to Israel to determine the significance of the particular words that were written on the parchment.

Moti Dotan took the wallet and brought it to Migdal haEmek where he showed it to Rabbi Yisrael Dovid Grossman. When Rabbi Grossman looked at the piece of Torah parchment that was made into a wallet, he was literally shaken to his core.

The pasukim on the parchment were from Parshas Ki Savo [Devorim 28:58-62]: "If you will not be careful to perform all the words of this Torah that are written in this Book, to fear this honored and awesome Name: Hashem your G-d, then Hashem will make extraordinary your blows and the blows of your offspring – great and faithful blows, and evil and faithful illnesses. He will bring back upon you all the sufferings of Egypt, before which you were terrified, and they will cleave to you. Even any illness and any blow that is not written in the Book of this Torah, Hashem will bring them upon you, until you are destroyed. You will be left few in number, instead of having been like the stars of heaven in abundance, for you will not have listened to the voice of Hashem your G-d."

Out of all the places that could have been cut out from the Sefer Torah, this wallet was cut out and made from the pasukim in the Tochacha! - Rabbi Grossman made the point that this incident was not a mere coincidence. He saw such a "coincidence" as a clear call from Heaven to do Teshhuva.

We see many events that are unfolding around us that bring us to the conclusion that nothing will save us other than the promise of ultimate redemption via the prophecy of "In the future the Jewish people will repent". Only the Master of the Universe can save us from the mess we are in. Our only hope is "You shall return to the L-rd your G-d."

The Joy of Mitzvos

Reb Shlomo Freifeld zt'l, the beloved Rosh Yeshivah and founder of Yeshivah Sh'or Yashuv, was a unique talmid chacham, legendary educator, and larger than life Torah personality that enjoyed particularly close, honest and personal relationships with his students. One morning at Shacharis, a close talmid observed Reb Shlomo laying tefillin.

After wrapping the tefillin shel yad around his arm, Reb Shlomo stopped, and with his eyes closed, was seemingly lost in thought. Only after a few lengthy moments of reflection, did the Rosh Yeshivah continue wrapping his tefillin shel rosh.

After davening, the student approached his Rebbi and asked why he had delayed placing the tefillin on his head, inquiring if the pause did not possibly constitute a hefsek, an interruption in the mitzvah. Reb Shlomo smiled and related a story from Masechet Brachos (30b): R' Yirmiya was 'excessively' joyful. When R' Zeira inquired as to why, R' Yirmiya replied with wonder: Ana tefillin manachna, "I am putting on tefillin!"

"The act of wrapping tefillin ought to fill the heart with joy," Explained Reb Shlomo zt'l. "Today, I just didn't feel it, so I paused to reflect upon what was holding me back from feeling happy. Only once I felt the appropriate simchah shel mitzvah did I continue laying my tefillin shel rosh."

The Chofetz Chaim was once overheard speaking to Hashem: "Master of the Universe, You have done so much for me already. I have written the Sefer Shmiras HaLashon. I have written the Mishneh Berura. You have done so much for me already, what can I do for you already?"



Benjamin Zander is a British Jew who escaped the holocaust with his family in 1938. Today, he is the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, a world-renowned composer and conductor.



A number of years ago, Bejamin gave a TED talk entitled 'The Transformative Power of Classical Music.' In that talk, he related a story that he heard from the person herself.

"I learnt this from a woman who survived Auschwitz as one of the rare survivors. She went to Auschwitz when she was 15 years old. She was put on the train together with her brother who was only 8 years old at the time. Their parents had already vanished, so it was only her and her brother that remained from the family."

"She told me this, she said, 'We were on the train going to Auschwitz. I looked down and I saw that my brother's shoes were missing. And I said to him, 'Why are you so stupid, can't you keep your things together for goodness sake.'

The doors of the train opened, and they were in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Unfortunately, it was the last thing that she ever said to

him, because she never saw him again. He did not survive. He was sent immediately to the gas chambers, and she never saw him again."

"And so, when she came out of Auschwitz into life, she made a vow, and the vow was – 'I will never say anything that couldn't stand as the last thing that I ever say!' - Whenever I speak to anybody, I will ask myself this question – If this is the last thing that I ever say to them, will I still say it?!"

I know that this is a profound calling. It's a tall order, but it's something that I think we can all aspire to do. - 'I will never say anything that couldn't stand as the last thing that I ever say!'



Better Than Money

Toward the end of **Reb Yosef Shalom Elyashiv**'s life, he collapsed, suffering from severe heart failure. The severity demanded immediate response and delaying even just a bit could've been at the expense of his life. In no time, Hatzalah was contacted, and the call was dispatched to the many members in the area.

One Hatzalah volunteer was right outside the Rav's home at the time. He came running right in, resuscitated him, and evidently saved the Gadol Hador's life.

Great pride was attributed to the acting hero.

When the story crossed overseas, a wealthy individual envied the hero. Eager to deposit such a mitzvah into his "account," he pulled out his thick checkbook and signed off a check in the amount of $1,000,000. Behind it was a paper articulating that it wasn't a gift but an offer to buy that *zechus*.

This was tempting. One million dollars is quite an offer, especially for a Yerushalayim Yid lacking even the basic necessities of life. He didn't have a steady income, and with several children of marriageable age, he didn't even have the means to cover the shadchanim, let alone to pay for the *chasunos*. So, having such an offer dropped into his mailbox took him by storm.

"Maybe, just maybe, this is just how Hashem is bringing about my *parnassah*?" contemplated the rescuer.

Such a proposal could not be resolved by anyone other than Reb Elyashiv himself, thought the rescuer to himself. Let the Rav resolve the dilemma. After hearing out the pitch and listening to his financial distress, Reb Elyashiv replied defiantly not to sell it. "It doesn't pay!"

Seeing the perplexation masking his face, Reb Elyashiv relayed a *mashal*: Suppose a young father passed away, leaving his young four-year-old with all his assets. One day, someone offered him a few candies in exchange for a skyscraper of his inheritance. The child, without batting an eyelash, responded affirmatively. "Why at all do I need it? Real estate doesn't supply me with toys, candies, or even ice-cream. What good is it?"

We don't need to conclude this story. It speaks for itself.

"Well, this offer is no different," concluded Reb Elyashiv. "You're being offered just $1,000,000 for Eternity. What worth does it weigh in comparison to *Olam Haba*? That sum is nothing more than some candy contrary to what's awaiting you in the Coming World.

"Don't forfeit it!

Every mitzvah builds for us an everlasting villa. Especially during Elul, when we 'Elul'vate our actions, we must contemplate our investments. Hashem stands at our door offering us priceless opportunities — for dirt cheap. **חאפ אריין**. *You won't regret it!*

"The Ribnitzer" by Rav Nachman Seltzer

When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, they sought to murder as many Jews as possible. Efficient as ever, German killing squads went from town to town, forcing the Jews out of their ghettos and into nearby forests, where they were ordered to dig their own graves and shot.

When the Nazi murderers arrived in Ribnitz and the order was given for the Jews to start digging, the community turned to their Rebbe and said, "We will do your share of the digging, and you will pray for us." He agreed and separated himself from everyone to pray.

The German commanding officer made everyone stand next to the ditch, and the soldiers readied themselves to shoot. Suddenly, the Ribnitzer Rebbe approached the commanding officer. Generally, anyone doing such a thing would be shot on the spot. But the officer, surprisingly, made no move and allowed the Rebbe to approach him. "*I would like to ask you for something.*"

"What's that, Jew?"

"*I would like you to give these people permission to pray before you shoot them.*"

The Rebbe was presenting the officer with a final request. The officer was taken aback. He gave it a brief thought and then said. "Absolutely not. No praying. The operation will commence on schedule."

But the Rebbe didn't give up. "*Giving people who are about to die the chance to pray is a basic human right.*"

The officer didn't care about basic human rights and ordered the Ribnitzer Rebbe to return to his spot by the open grave. He then turned back to the soldiers who were waiting for his order. "Ready, aim..." The officer was about to call out, "Fire!" when the hapless Jews standing before their own graves heard the unexpected sound of a helicopter flying above them coming in for a landing.

The officer commanded his soldiers to stand down as they waited to find out why the helicopter had come. The door of the helicopter opened and a figure emerged. When the dust settled, everyone could see that the newcomer was a high-ranking German officer. The soldiers snapped to attention, and their commanding officer inquired as to the reason for the surprise visit. The officer explained that he was on a routine inspection and was pleased to see the soldiers were carrying out their mission to eliminate another community of Jews for the sake of the Fatherland.

The soldiers were about to carry on when the Rebbe approached the highest-ranking officer on the scene who dropped in from the sky. In his hand, the Rebbe carried a velvet bag filled with whatever gold and jewelry the Jews of the Ribnitz community managed to keep hidden. The Rebbe respectfully greeted the officer and said, "*I just wanted to wish you a happy birthday.*" - The officer was taken aback. "How did you know that it's my birthday today?" his tone conveying surprise.

The Rebbe just smiled. Then he handed the velvet bag to the officer as a birthday present. The woman accompanying the high-ranking officer spoke for the first time. "Please don't kill this man. He's a special person." The officer agreed to do as she asked.

The Rebbe said, "*If you're going to spare my life, I ask that you spare the lives of my people as well.*" The officer nodded, "Your request is granted." He looked inside the bag at the gold and jewelry. "Keep this. Your people will need bread during the war."

The Rebbe still wasn't done. "*I would like to make a suggestion: instead of killing these people, I would like to recommend that they build a park and a monument in your name.*" - The Rebbe's idea appealed to the officer's vanity, and so it was that the Jews of Ribnitz were saved.



One Kind Encounter by Rabbi Shlomo Landau

About eighty years ago, R' Isaac Sher, the son-in-law of the Alter from Slabodka, arrived in Eretz Yisrael. About the time of his arrival, there was a bachur in the Chevron Yeshivah who had strayed very far from the ways of a yeshivah bachur and sadly was dragging other talmidim with him as he spiralled downward. The hanhalah of the yeshivah was at a loss as to how to proceed with him.

R' Gedaliah Eiseman, a member of the hanhalah, decided to approach R' Isaac Sher for guidance. R' Isaac was a master mechanech and R' Gedaliah was sure that he would give them direction on how to deal with the errant bachur.

After R' Gedaliah shared the necessary details, R' Isaac said that he wanted to meet the bachur personally. The next day, when R' Gedaliah brought the bachur to R' Isaac, R' Isaac reached into his pocket and took out a large sum of money, equivalent to an average laborer's salary for a full month. He handed it to the bachur with explicit instructions:

1. Travel to Tel Aviv to the house of a particular person who deals in rentals and use some of the money to rent a room for a week.

2. Visit the beach daily, take a quick dip in the sea, and then go for a solid morning run.

3. At 12:00-ish each afternoon, take the 54 bus to Bnei Brak and get there in time for Minchah with an elderly Yid by the name of R' Avrohom Yeshayah Karelitz (the Chazon Ish).

Finally, R' Isaac remarked, "Take the money, but understand that I intend to follow up to make sure that my conditions are being met. Understand?"

The bachur left with a smile on his face.

R' Gedaliah stood there in shock; this was not what he had anticipated! He looked at R' Isaac quizzically. Noticing his consternation, R'Isaac responded, "I want to be clear. My assumption is that you did not bring him to me to determine if he will be R'Akiva Eiger or the Nesivos, did you?"

R' Gedaliah nodded in the affirmative.

"If so, let me handle this bachur going forward."

True to his word, the bachur headed for Tel Aviv, rented an apartment, took a dip and a jog at the beach, and at around noon he boarded the number 54 bus for Bnei Brak and stayed there for Minchah. After Minchah the Chazon Ish noticed the bachur and approached him, greeting him with shalom aleichem.

"Who are you?" asked the Chazon Ish.

Concerned that the Chazon Ish would start talking to him in learning, the bachur elected not to respond. An awkward silence ensued, and suddenly the Chazon Ish said, "Understand, I am not stam asking for your name; I just wanted to make sure that you have a good place to eat and sleep!"

"Yes, yes," the bachur replied. "I'm taken care of."

And then the most unforgettable thing happened. The venerable Chazon Ish raised his hand and warmly stroked the bachur's cheek! The bachur turned around and walked out.

The rest is history. As he returned daily for Minchah with the Chazon Ish, he felt better about himself and his relationship with Torah and mitzvos. Over time, he re-entered the world that he had tried so hard to leave, and today he is on the giving side as a renowned rosh yeshivah and marbitz Torah. All in the zechus of one kind sentence and one warm and loving stroke on the cheek!



Inspired by Time - Faith Behind Bars: The Skulener Rebbe's Strength – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

The holy Skulener Rebbe zt"l, the Noam Eliezer, once told of an episode from his difficult years in Romania. It was a time of crushing persecution, when he risked his life to save bochurim from being drafted into the Romanian army – a danger not only to their bodies, but to their very neshamos.

Eventually, a cruel moser informed on him, and the authorities arrested him. They chained his feet, stripped him of his yarmulke and glasses, and threw him into solitary confinement – a filthy pit, unfit even for animals. He was physically weak, his body broken, his fate uncertain. When he asked how long he would be held, they told him coldly: "Forever!"

Morning came, and with it a thought: "One thing I have now is time. Here, no one is rushing me. Here, I can daven Shacharis without interruption, with full kavana for every single word."

He pulled his coat over his head in place of a yarmulke, and he began. He reached Baruch She'amar: "Baruch she'amar v'haya ha'olam; baruch Hu; baruch oseh bereishis; baruch omer v'oseh; baruch gozer u'mekayem; Baruch merachem al ha'aretz..."

Suddenly he stopped. "Baruch gozer u'mekayem — blessed is He who decrees and fulfills." The other phrases all speak of kindness, of compassion, of salvation — Hashem who has mercy, who redeems, who answers. But why here does it mention decrees? Why bring something that seems so negative into the midst of this tefila of praise?

The Rebbe repeated the words again and again until their meaning shone with clarity: "Baruch gozer u'mekayem — blessed is He who

decrees, and sustains." - Yes, Hashem sometimes sends decrees, trials, and suffering. But when he is gozer right away u'mekayem, He gives the strength to endure. The decree is never sent alone. Along with it comes the sustenance, the inner fortitude, the unseen mercy that allows a Jew to withstand it.

That's the wonder of Hashem's kindness: He decrees — but He upholds. He tests but He also sustains. No nisayon is ever beyond us.

So it is in life. We look around and wonder why others seem to "get away" with things that are crushingly difficult for us. Why is one person spared, while I am asked to endure?

The answer is that each neshama has its own test. Hashem, the ultimate Teacher, tailors every nisayon to the individual – and with it, He gives the exact strength needed to prevail.

This is one of Elul's most powerful lessons. The nisyonos of life are real; they can be frightening, and sometimes they feel utterly beyond our strength. Yet the Torah assures us: if the nisayon has come to you, then within you lies the koach to prevail. Hashem does not send a test that is impossible.

The Weekly Vort

In the days of Elul, one must awaken from the slumber of sleep, for in these days a person stands before a great and awesome judgment. Behold, if a man has a major court case, he prepares his words and arranges them well in advance. Similarly, a man of war makes many preparations so that he will not stumble. If he does not prepare—he loses everything. So too, this is exactly the matter of the days of Elul: to prepare oneself with teshuvah and good deeds, so as not to stumble on the Day of Judgment. — The Alter of Kelm (Chochma u'Mussar)



Rav Shimshon of Ostropoli zt"l
הרב שמשון בן פסח מאוסטרופולי זצ"ל

◣ R' Shimshon of Ostropol, known to generations as R' Shimshon Ostropoler, stands as a master of Kabbalah, a fearless *maggid*, and ultimately a *kadosh* who gave his life *al kiddush Hashem*.

◣ Born around the year 1600, likely in Eastern Europe, little is definitively known about R' Shimshon's early years, which seems fitting for one whose life would become steeped in the hidden aspects of Torah. From an early age, his brilliance and burning intensity were apparent. At a young age he had mastered large portions of the Zohar by heart. He emerged as a prodigious *talmid chochom* and *mekubal*, likely influenced by the *talmidim* of the Arizal. He also merited many revelations of the secrets of the Torah in dreams. In one place, Rav Shimshon writes how the *Megaleh Amukos*, Rav Nosson Nota of Krakow, appeared to him in a dream and explained to him a difficult piece of liturgy.

◣ R' Shimshon eventually settled in the city of Ostropol, located in the region of Volhynia (modern-day Ukraine), where he served as a *dayan* and later as the community's *maggid*. But he was not an ordinary *maggid*. His *drashos* were electric, filled with heavenly fire

and dazzling insights of *kabbalah*. People would flock from surrounding towns to hear his *drashos*, often delivered with tears and trembling.

◣ Despite his immersion in *Kabbalah*, R' Shimshon was not detached from the people. He believed that the deep secrets of Torah were not to be hoarded by a few but could—if transmitted with clarity—touch the souls of even the simplest Jew. He had the rare gift of making mystical teachings accessible, often focusing on the hidden kindness of Hashem even in times of pain and loss.

◣ R' Shimshon's greatest test—and his sanctification—came with the eruption of the Chmielnicki Uprising in 1648, known was *Gzeiros Tach v'Tat*. The Cossack-led revolt brought with it a wave of unthinkable pogroms, as entire Jewish communities across Ukraine and Poland were slaughtered r"l. As news of destruction reached Ostropol, the community was gripped with fear.

R' Shimshon intensified his *tefillos*, fasts, and public *drashos*. He warned the people that a great decree had been sealed in the Heavenly Courts. He engaged in hours of *kabbalistic* meditation, using Divine Names and *kavanos* in an effort to annul the decree. But eventually he confided to his closest students, "I have seen it. The decree stands. We may not be able to avert it— but we can rise to meet it."

◣ As Cossack forces approached Ostropol, many Jews fled. R' Shimshon refused. On the day of the massacre, the 17th of Elul, 5408 (1648), he gathered hundreds of Jews in the main shul. Dressed in white *talleisim*, he led them in *Vidui* and *tefillah*.

Survivors said it resembled *Ne'ilah* of Yom Kippur. When the Cossacks stormed in, they were met with a vision: hundreds of Jews singing *Shema Yisrael* in unison, faces turned Heavenward. R' Shimshon stood at the *bimah*, arms raised, face radiant, and cried out "Hashem Hu HaElokim!" seven times. Some say the first sword that struck him broke. Others claim he smiled as he died.

◣ Three hundred Jews were killed that day in Ostropol. But the sanctity of their deaths echoed far beyond the city limits. Stories spread of survivors who dreamt of R' Shimshon urging them to rebuild, to learn Torah in memory of the fallen, and to never allow despair to define Jewish existence.

One such story tells of a shoemaker in Mezhibuzh who dreamt of R' Shimshon a year after the massacre. In the dream, he was told, "The sword takes the body, not the soul. Our fire lives on. Each *daf* studied, each tear shed for Heaven, raises our *neshamos* higher."

◣ R' Shimshon Ostropoler lived and died as a man of *gevurah* — inner strength, clarity, and unshakable *emunah*. More than three centuries later, we still hear the echo of his final cry: "Hashem Hu HaElokim." And we are reminded that in the darkest hour, the Jewish *neshama* can still shine like fire.

The yahrzeit of R' Shimshon ben R' Pesach of Ostropol ztk"l is on 17 Elul (1648). May his merit protect us.

• **הותרך ה' לטובה בפרי בטנך** – ***Hashem shall give you bountiful goodness in the fruit of your womb*** (28:11).

The Rambam writes a letter to his son in which he states that it is good for a person to swiftly complete his task in this world and end his days quickly. - **The Chasam Sofer** explains that this applies only to the person himself. But if one has children and must educate them to Torah and *mitzvos*, there is no set limit on the days which he should spend in this world, for the longer he lives, the more he can influence his children and grandchildren. Therefore, the above *pasuk* states, **והותרך ה' לטובה** , the word **והותרך** from the root of **יותר**, *more*. Hashem will give you *more* years than you were destined to receive.

Why? Because of **פרי בטנך**, because of your children, so that you can be there to educate them. (Ma'ayanah Shel Torah)

- **היום הזה נהיית לעם – *This day you have become a People*** (27:9).

R' Shamshon Rafael Hirsh explains that today, when you accepted on yourself with an oath to fulfill the Torah, then you became a nation. Klal Yisroel's nationhood did not start when they acquired their own land or language. It began with their commitment to fulfill the Torah. (Mayaanah Shel Torah)



Let Me Help You!

When we do a chesed, an act of kindness for another person, we think that we are doing them a favor. In reality, we are doing a favor for ourselves.



In the 1920's Moshe lived in Yugoslavia and ran a successful business. One day his friend asked him to cosign on a large bank loan that he needed for his own business. Moshe agreed. Soon after, his friend's business failed. Because he could not repay the loan, the bank turned to Moshe to pay it. Moshe could not and his own business was taken from him. Left without a livelihood, Moshe immigrated to America.

Moshe succeeded in starting a business which became very successful. When Moshe passed away,

he had 109 grandchildren. Moshe's hometown in Yugoslavia had been wiped out during the Holocaust. Moshe's move to America saved his life. (Living Emunah 6 by Rabbi David Ashear)

Moshe thought that he was doing a chesed for a friend. It turned out that he was the beneficiary of the chesed.

I have heard many rabbis say that the time of Moshiach's arrival is getting ever closer. We should increase our efforts in two areas to "protect" ourselves from the "birth pangs" that will proceed Moshiach's arrival. We should increase the amount of Torah that we learn. We should also increase our acts of chesed that we do for others.

Rabbeinu Yonah (Sha'arei Teshuvah, First Gate, paragraph 47) says that even after we repent from our sins, certain sins need to be cleansed by yisurin, afflictions. However, acts of chesed protect one from these afflictions. The acts of chesed take the place of the afflictions.

Rav Yisroel Salanter says when you are asked to do a chesed you should imagine that it is more difficult to do than it actually is. You should think that you would still do this act of chesed even under these difficult circumstances. If you do that, Hashem rewards you as if you had actually done the more difficult chesed!

The Ralbag (Bereishis 24:19) says that a person who does everything that he is asked is a person who does chesed. However, he is not considered the ultimate doer-of-chesed. The ultimate doer-of-chesed is one who notices or anticipates a person's needs before he is asked. One who is alert to the needs of others even before being asked and then helps is the one who is the ultimate doer-of-chesed.

Obviously, we should try to do as many acts of chesed as we can. Even so, we should strive to raise our level of chesed by emulating our forefather Avraham who actively searched for opportunities to do chesed.

A few examples that come to mind are noticing and helping someone carrying heavy packages, opening the door for someone, offering a seat to an older person, offering a ride, inviting others to a meal, calling someone who is sick or lonely, showing friendship to a new neighbor or a new student in class or someone living away from home. Obviously, there are many other opportunities to do chesed if we look for them. The acts of chesed that we do for others help them but benefit us the most! Now, more than ever, is the time to increase our acts of chesed!

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l



תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָבַדְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב מֵרֹב כֹּל - From this *posuk*, the *Torah* is clearly detailing to us how critical it is to serve *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* with happiness. It would seem that שִׂמְחָה - true happiness and joy, is the antidote or can at least help prevent the harsh curses that we, *Rachmana Litzlan*, must sometimes endure.

It is told that one year, as the **Baal Shem Tov** ***zt"l*** waited to recite *kiddush levana* on *Motzei Yom Kippur*, there was no visible moon as the sky was completely overcast. He saw with *ruach hakodesh* that it was imperative for it to be recited that night, or the results could be catastrophic for *Yidden* around the world.

He tried all sorts of his holy *avodah* to clear the skies, but to no avail. The clouds remained overcast and the holy *tefillah* could not yet be recited. The *Chassidim*, oblivious to their *Rebbe's* angst and actions, were dancing joyously as every year, to celebrate the culmination of the holy day. Their ecstatic dancing reached a frenzy

and they dared to ask their *Rebbe* to join. He agreed and did indeed dance with them. - In the midst of rejoicing, they suddenly realized that the moon appeared! *A neis*!

The *Baal Shem Tov* exclaimed: "What I couldn't accomplish through Kabbalistic supplications was achieved with the *simcha* we exuded just being **עובד את ה' בשמחה**.

In fact, the *Rebbe*, **Reb Bunim *zt"l*** quotes the *posuk*, " **כִּי בְשִׂמְחָה תֵּצֵאוּ** - "*With happiness you will go out"* and explains it as follows: Through the *middah* of *simcha*, you will be enabled to leave – to exit – from all your *tzaros*.

We read these words specifically at this juncture, that we may strengthen our resolve, both personally and communally, to live and serve *Hashem b'simcha*. Perhaps through the joy we exhibit, *Hashem* will rescind **כל גזירות קשות** and shower us all with unlimited *beracha* and *besuros tovos*!

Parshah Thoughts – Ideas and Reflections – Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

When Moshe Rabbeinu describes our relationship with Hashem (26:16-19) he mentions to "go in His ways", "V'Halachta Bidrachav".

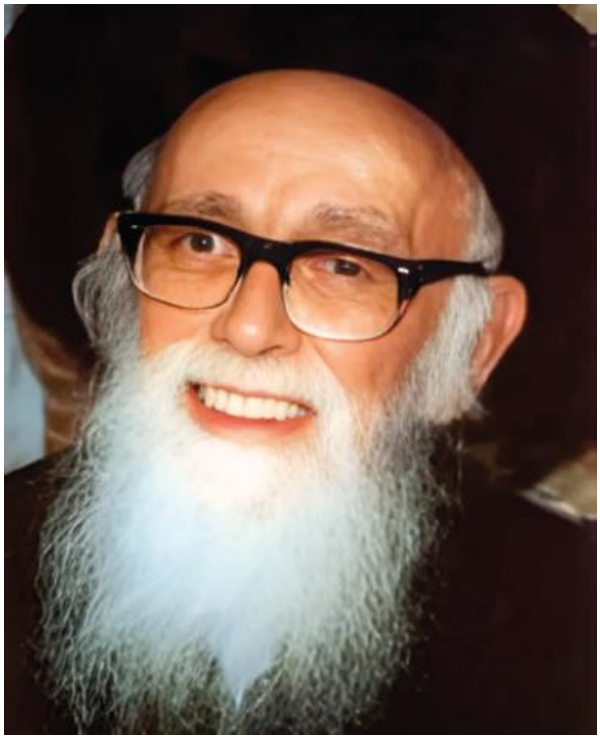
Rav Eliyahu Dessler in his magnificent work Michtav Me'Eliyahu, depicts what this means. To go in the ways of Hashem means to help others in areas that they can benefit or are deficient in. - In other words, the ways of Hashem means to do good to others.

Rav Yissochar Frand once said: "Give a poor man a dollar, and you become a Baal Tzedakah. Give it with a smile, and you become a Baal Chesed!"

When They Were Young

RABBI SHLOMO ZALMAN AUERBACH
הרב שלמה זלמן אויערבאך זצ"ל





As a young boy, Shlomo Zalman learned in one of the *chadarim* of Yerushalayim. Many *gedolei Yisrael* took their first steps to greatness on the simple wooden benches found in those rooms.

There was a very strong student who "skipped" into Shlomo Zalman's class in the *cheder*, where he was younger than everyone else. Unfortunately, his new classmates did not like the fact that he'd joined their class. Most of them did not treat him nicely.

Soon, it was time for the boy to celebrate his bar mitzvah. In those days, the class would chip in and buy the bar mitzvah boy a set of *sefarim*. However, the classmates decided not to give this boy a gift. Not only that, but they decided not to show up to his bar mitzvah at all!

It's hard to imagine how hurtful such a plan would be to a young boy. Since this newcomer had left his previous class, his former classmates would not attend. And now, due to the boys' plan, his

current class would not be there either. How would he explain to his family why no friends were coming to his bar mitzvah?

One boy, however, refused to participate in the classmates' plan. When the special day arrived, Shlomo Zalman Auerbach attended the bar mitzvah. And he brought a beautiful *sefer* as a gift, a gift he had bought on his own. This one act of kindness was enough to protect this new boy from feeling embarrassed and rejected.

Shlomo Zalman prevented this most joyous day from turning into a sad one. Reb Shlomo Zalman and the boy remained friends throughout their lives, and they learned together as well.

Reb Shlomo Zalman's actions as a teenager mirrored his life as an adult. He treated every Yid with genuine love and respect.



Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach

Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was the first child born in the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood of Yerushalayim. His father, R' Chaim Yehudah Leib, was a well-known *talmid chacham* and founder of Yeshivas Shaar HaShamayim in Yerushalayim. His mother was Rebbetzin Tzivia. Shlomo Zalman learned at the famous Yeshivas Etz Chaim in Yerushalayim. His main rebbeim were R' Isser Zalman Meltzer, R' Yechezkel Sarna, and R' Tzvi Pesach Frank. He married Chaya Rivkah Ruchamkin.

In 1938, R' Shlomo Zalman began teaching at Yeshivas Kol Torah in Yerushalayim. His reputation as a rebbi grew, and his *shiurim* attracted many students. He became one of the foremost halachic authorities in the world. His warmth and caring for every Jew served as an example until his *petirah* in 1995.





There is an idea that some people have – 'Awkward silence.' You know, it's so uncomfortable if I have nothing to say. People sometimes say, "Silence is awkward."

Says the Rambam - **לעולם ירבה אדם בשתיקה** – Produce a lot of silence. Silence is an achievement. Silence is an accomplishment. The ability to remain silent when you have something not so positive to share, is a great achievement.

But let's study for a moment the physiology of the mouth in order to gain an important insight into this accomplishment of keeping silent.

The Gemarah tells us that all the organs in the human body were created in a vertical position. The heart is vertical. The lungs are vertical. However, there is one exception… The tongue is horizontal!

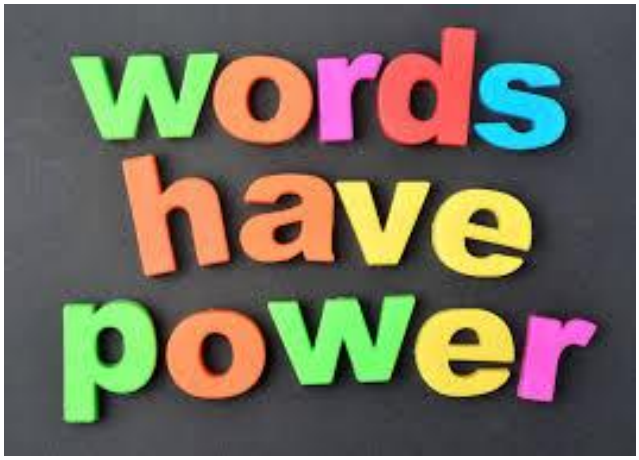
This teaches us that… It's there - It's powerful – It's a tool. You can use it… When you need to. But if you don't need to, its natural state is at rest. This teaches us that one should try to achieve the great accomplishment of silence.

Silence has two guards- The teeth and the mouth. This tells us just how important the tongue is. It's a powerful tool, but only when you need it. If you don't need it, there's nothing wrong with producing the greatest achievement of **לעולם ירבה אדם בשתיקה - A person will always grow with silence.**



Words Have Power by Rabbi Shlomo Landau

Young Meir Chadash grew up in a town in White Russia. The Jews in this town were by and large very ignorant. Their basic level of Jewish learning was not much more than Chumash. His parents had higher aspirations for him, so they sent their 11-year-old Meir to a different country – Lithuania, to learn in the Slabodka Yeshivah. His poor parents could not even afford the normal way of transportation, and it took many weeks for young Meir to make it all the way to Slabodka.



On his first day there, Meir was so homesick. He couldn't sleep and he missed his parents. He was far younger than the rest of the talmidim in the yeshivah. He felt like an outcast and was in a really bad space.

Because he couldn't sleep, he wandered into the Beis Hamedrash late at night. As he came in, there was one bachur there who looked up and saw him - His name was Yechezkiel Bornstein. Yechezkiel walked over to him and put his arm over his shoulder, and said… "Tzadik, when I came to this yeshivah, I was also very homesick. But you know what? Now I'm ok, because you will realise what I realised – That in this yeshivah you have 500 new brothers!"

Those words gave little Meir hope. And like they say, 'The rest is history'. Young Meir became the great gadol and Tzadik… Rav Meir Chadosh. Incidentally, the other bachor – Yechezkiel Bornstein became the 'Divrei Yechezkiel', a scholar who was larger than life.

You know, it's almost Rosh Hashana, and when we empower other people using our words, than our words have so much more power. Let's find opportunities to empower the people around us. And when we stand before Hashem and open up our mouths to request a שָׁנָה טוֹבָה - a good year, our words will have so much power.



Inspired by Time - The Hope Hidden in Selichos – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

On Monday, Klal Yisrael was plunged into terror and mourning. A number 62 bus, carrying precious, innocent Yidden simply traveling from place to place, suddenly became a scene of horror. What appeared to be ordinary inspectors boarded the bus – but instead of checking tickets, they opened fire on the passengers. In moments, six kedoshim were murdered al Kiddush Hashem, and many more were left gravely wounded.

As if that were not enough, just a day earlier UAV's exploded at Ramon Airport, injuring more Yidden. And all this unfolds while dozens of our brothers and sisters remain in captivity – starving, wounded, tortured – as Klal Yisrael has endured two long years of terror and carnage. These are not ordinary days. They are days of anguish, days that shake us to the core.

And it is precisely at such times that we begin Selichos. Could there be a clearer message? Clearly, we have much teshuva to undertake, an overwhelming amount for which to daven.

If we open the Chumash to this week's parsha, we find the klalos set before us – pesukim that make us tremble. At first glance, one might think these parshiyos are placed here merely to instil fear, to drive

us into Selichos and Rosh Hashana with dread. But the Gemara tells us otherwise: Tichleh shana v'kileloseha. Ezra haSofer established that the curses in Toras Kohanim (Bechukosai) be read before Shavuos, and the curses in Mishna Torah (Ki Savo) before Rosh Hashana – so that the year and its curses should end, and the new year open with blessing.

Yes, we have endured a very difficult year. Yes, we have just lived through a week of horror and pain. But the Torah is teaching us something important: we are not only concluding a year – we are concluding its curses. We are given the chance to place the pain, the suffering, and the tragedies of the year into the past, and to step forward into a new year overflowing with bracha, with light, and with prosperity.

The tochachah is not a prediction of doom for the future. We stand now at the threshold of a new year, and the Torah is handing us a key: leave behind the curses, carry only the lessons, and enter Rosh Hashana with fresh hope.

The Vilna Gaon explains that the reason that there are two sets of klalos is because there are two kinds of judgment. The klalos in Bechukosai are written in the plural, directed to Klal Yisrael as a nation, and are read before Shavuos – the "Rosh Hashana" of Kabbalas haTorah, when the nation stands as one before Hashem. The klalos in Ki Savo are written in the singular, directed to each individual, and they are read before Rosh Hashana – the day when every single soul passes before Hashem one by one.

That is the message of this week. We are not anonymous victims of random events. We are individuals being spoken to by Hashem. Every hostage, every act of terror, every bit of pain represents the voice of Hashem calling directly to us, to His dear children, exclaiming Shuvu banim shovavim – return, wayward children! My children, the upcoming year can be different, it can be better – and it is in your hands. The klalos are not meant to crush us; they are meant to shake

us awake. They are not predictions, they are warnings, and warnings are given only out of love.

A father who sees his son wandering near a cliff does not remain silent. He shouts, he warns, he cries out – not to frighten him but to save his life. The same is true of these parshiyos. Hashem is calling: My child, do not continue as you did. Do not carry the curses of the past year into the next. Step forward differently, and the year that begins can be filled only with bracha.

It was during the Second World War, in the burning ruins of Europe. A young man named Dovid had lost everything. His parents had been murdered before his eyes. His little brothers and sisters torn away. He had survived only because he had been forced into slave labor, working on the railways under the whip of German guards.

Each day was another curse. Hunger gnawed at him, the cold cut through him, and the screams of the dying filled his ears. He walked like a shadow. Once, he had been a vibrant yeshiva bachur who sang zemiros at his father's Shabbos table. Now, he felt like a ghost, walking among the living dead.

One night, after hours of gruelling work, he collapsed beside the broken tracks. He lifted his eyes to Heaven and whispered: "Ribbono Shel Olam, what more do You want? The tochacha has come true in every word. We are cursed, destroyed, crushed. Is there anything left to hope for?"

As he sat there, he heard a faint sound. At first, he thought it was the wind. But then he realized—it was a voice. A group of men, gaunt and frail-like skeletons, were huddled together in the dark. And from their cracked lips came words that shook him to the core: "Shema koleinu Hashem Elokeinu... Al tashlicheinu milfanecha."

They were saying Selichos. In Auschwitz. With death all around them, they were whispering the ancient plea of Klal Yisrael.

Dovid crawled closer. He heard them cry: "Ki Anu Amecha... v'Ata Elokenu – We are Your people, and You are our G-d." And suddenly, something broke inside him. He wept like he had never wept before. He thought: If these men, who have lost everything, still believe we are His people, then maybe curses are not the end. Maybe there is something after this. Maybe the year of curses can truly end.

From that night on, he clung to those words. He forced himself to live not just for himself, but to whisper Selichos with those men in the shadows. - Somehow, against all odds, he survived.

Years later, Dovid was in Yerushalayim. He had rebuilt his life. He had a family, children around his Shabbos table, and a small yeshiva that he had founded in memory of the kedoshim who did not survive.

One Elul, his students gathered around him as he led them in Selichos. His voice broke as he cried the words of selichos, and then he stopped, turned to his talmidim, and said: "I stood in a place where curses consumed us. I thought it was the end of everything. But Hashem gave us Selichos, not as a funeral, but as a beginning. He showed us that curses can end, and blessing can begin again. We are living proof. Every one of you, every word of Torah, every tefila in this room, is the answer to the curses. Do not think the tochacha is only doom. It is Hashem shouting, "Wake up! Don't stay in the darkness! Step forward into blessing!"

May this be the year when our blood is no longer spilled, when the hostages return home, when Klal Yisrael rises from darkness to light, and when all our cries of Selach lanu, mechol lanu, kaper lanu are answered with the greatest smile of all – the smile of Hashem returning to Tzion with rachamim, speedily in our days.

"Aim for a life of consistent spiritual growth – not perfection." ~ Rabbi Noach Weinberg.

Splendid Quote of the Week by Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"Don't be embarrassed to do good deeds, lift your head and do it proudly."

We are told to bring the bikkurim (the first of the crop) to the Beis Hamikdash. Following a whole production, the Kohen takes the basket of new fruits and puts it in front of the mizbeach. Then the owner is required to raise his voice in gratitude to Hashem for everything He has done for him.

Why is there a rule that he must speak out loud?

When doing a Mitzvah, one should not hide it or be embarrassed. Rather, he should be open about doing a Mitzvah and be proud. There can be times when we are abashed to do what's right, but we can overcome that hardship, and maybe even others will see and be able to join in doing the Mitzvah.



The Night the Crying Stopped by Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

My friends, I want to share with you a powerful story that shows how deep emunah can transform even the darkest situation.

Chacham Ben Tzion Mutsafi once related an incredible incident that took place in his kehilla: There was a young family whose newborn baby suffered terribly. From the moment the child woke up until he was put to bed, he screamed — and even then, he screamed through the night. He would cry until he passed out from exhaustion, wake up, and begin screaming again.

The parents were falling apart. The baby wasn't sleeping, and because of that, he was becoming weak and sick. They went everywhere for help — to doctors, to rabbanim, to mekubalim. No one could identify the problem, and nothing worked.

One day, the mother — a very simple Jewish woman — was walking through the street. She had grown up in extreme poverty, had never

gone to school, and barely knew how to read. As she walked, she noticed a piece of paper blowing in the wind. She picked it up and realized it was a torn page from a Chumash. She kissed it and said to herself, "Maybe this is what Hashem sent me. Maybe this is the shlichus He is giving me to help my child." - She whispered a tefillah: "May the words of Hashem, the holy words of the Torah, the Names of Hashem written here, bring refuah to my son."

She brought the paper home and placed it under her baby's pillow. That night — for the first time in the child's life — he slept through the entire night. In the morning, the husband woke up in shock. "We slept," he said. "What happened? What did we do differently?" The wife explained what she had done.

The husband ran to the crib, pulled out the paper — and his face turned white. "Do you know what this page says?" he asked her. She answered honestly, "No. I don't really understand Lashon HaKodesh." He said, "This page is from the kelalos in Parshas Ki Savo. It describes terror at night — pachad balayla — and a person saying, 'If only it were morning,' and during the day, 'If only it were night.' How could you put this under our child's pillow?"

The husband immediately ran to Chacham Ben Tzion Mutsafi and showed him the page. The Chacham looked at it, smiled, and said: "You're right. It is from the kelalos. And what do those kelalos describe? Exactly what your family was experiencing — terror at night." Then he quoted the pasuk: "**וַיַּהֲפֹךְ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְךָ אֶת־הַקְּלָלָה לִבְרָכָה** — Hashem will turn the curse into a blessing — because Hashem loves you."

Chacham Ben Tzion said, "Your wife's emunah was so pure, so complete, that Hashem took the very words of the kelalah and transformed them into the exact brachah you needed. The fear of the night was turned into peaceful sleep."

We spend our lives chasing brachos, thinking they must come from specific sources. But HaKadosh Baruch Hu can turn anything — even

something that appears dark or frightening — into a brachah. What is the condition? כִּי אֲהֵבְךָ ה׳ אֱלֹהֶיךָ: - Because Hashem loves you. And love works both ways. As the pasuk says: כַּמַּיִם הַפָּנִים לַפָּנִים - just as water reflects a face, love reflects love. - When a person lives with simple, unwavering emunah, Hashem turns even the night into light.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - A Supporter's Dream



The Chofetz Chaim writes from sefarim that one who supports Torah, although he was an *Am Ha'aretz* in this world he merits that he will know the Torah in the future. This is easy to understand because he has reward for the Torah he supported and the great pleasure in Gan Eden is Torah. Consequently, how can he have pleasure in Gan Eden otherwise?

After one of the supporters of the Volozhiner yeshiva died, **R' Chaim Volozhiner** would learn Mishnayos in his memory. One day R' Chaim Volozhiner was leaning a difficult Mishna that he was unable to understand. From his exertion, he got tired and fell asleep. While asleep, the deceased appeared to him in a dream, explaining to him

the Mishna, as if he was an expert in that Mishna—although he was ignorant in Torah throughout his life.

When R' Chaim Volozhiner awoke, he exclaimed, "I knew that one who supports Torah receives Gan Eden. But I didn't know that it would happen so quickly" (as this story took place just a few days after this supporter's death.).

Unhappy Service



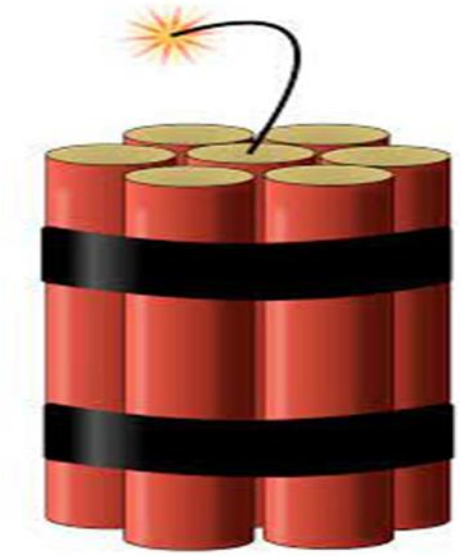
It is written **תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה**... - ***because you didn't serve Hashem with Simcha***... On the Shalosh Regalim we have a special Mitzva of Simcha. Consequently, **שמח** is an acronym for **שמחתנו, מתן תורתנו, חרותנו** — Succos, Shavuos and Pesach.

The question is asked by many: The result of a lack of Simcha is all these curses?! We must serve Hashem with Simcha. In **שמע ישראל...אחד** the **ע** of **שמע** and the **ד** of **אחד** are written large in a Sefer Torah. These two spell **עד** , witness because by reciting Shema we bear witness to Hashem's oneness.

What do the remaining letters of **שמע** and **אחד** spell? **אשמח**, and it says **אנכי אשמח בה'** , I will rejoice in Hashem. We must accept Hashem's sovereignty (symbolized by Shema) with Simcha and as it says **עבדו את ה' בשמחה**, serve Hashem with Simcha.

When we have true Simcha, we don't sin. The above Pasuk can now be understood that the underlying (**תחת**) cause of sin is a lack of Simcha.

Never Too Late



At times an older person may despair and think it is too late to change.

This is indicated by the word **שיבה** (old) as it yields a Gematria of 317, the same as **יאוש**, despair. However, it is never too late to return to Hashem as is also shown in the word **שיבה שב י–ה** , return to Hashem. An example of this is R' Akiva who started his return at the age of 40.

The Nobel Peace Prize named after Alfred Nobel came about when his brother- Ludvig Nobel died on April 12, 1888. A French newspaper mistakenly thought he died as the headline of the newspaper read "the merchant of death died" as he is the one who invented dynamite. He was so pained by this that on November 27, 1895 he wrote a 4 page missive while sitting in a club in Paris. This document contained his will leaving 90% of his estate, about 31 million Swedish kroner (which is equivalent to 250$ million) to the cause of peace. He wanted the money invested and interest given "in the form of prizes to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind."

In order not to waste our time with futility we need to internalize that when one dies, he is accompanied only by Torah and **מעשים טובים**. In fact the word for death is **מת - מעשים טובים** and **תורה**. This is in accordance with the expression, "Fear not death rather unlived life."

Nothing you wear is more important than your smile.

Simcha- Good or Bad?



We know that there is no Tzadik that is totally righteous that never sins- **אין צדיק אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא**. However, when one sins how does he feel. Is he happy about it or does he regret it? There are those that while they are sinning, wish they could withdraw from it.

When Moshe descended from the mountain and saw the Jews worshipping the Eigel he smashed the Luchos. Is that why he broke them? The wording of the Pasuk is **וירא את העגל ומחלת...וישבר**- he saw the calf and the dances…and he smashed the Luchos.

Once he saw they were happy- symbolized from their dancing- that is when he broke it. In this light, the **Kotzker** translates **תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלה-יך <u>בשמחה</u>**- not only did you not serve Hashem, but you did it with Simcha.

We need to transfer this energy and perform our Mitzvos with Simcha. It was the day after Succos, while the **Chassam Sofer** (1762-1839) was writing replies to questions from all over the world, that he heard a knock at the door. It was the wealthiest person in the community whose business collapsed and was now penniless.

The Chassam Sofer offered words of encouragement until the man regained self- confidence. The man then said that at this time of the year he usually goes to the Leipzig fare, but now he doesn't have money to make the trip, let alone for purchases. The Chassam Sofer lent him the money he needed and instructed him what to do at the fair. Following his advice, he made a huge profit. Not too long after, he became even wealthier than before.

Overwhelmed with gratitude for the loan and advice, he bought an expensive gift. When he presented it to the Chassam Sofer, his face lit up with joy while praising the beauty of the diamond. After admiring the jewel for a few minutes, he said he can't accept it since it would be a violation of taking interest.

When the businessman left, the Chassam Sofer said he felt so joyous upon seeing the jewel since it was the first time in his life that he had the opportunity to fulfill the Mitzva of not taking interest.

In a related story, **R' Nosson Adler** was once travelling with the **Chassam Sofer** on a cold winter day in a wagon being pulled by two horses. Suddenly one of the horses tumbled over and died. Being that only one horse remained, the wagon driver travelled on foot to the nearest town to procure another horse, as one horse didn't have enough strength to pull the wagon.

The driver later came back with a donkey. Upon seeing this R' Nosson Adler descended from the wagon and began to dance with joy. When his student asked him why he was so happy, he replied that since the driver brought a donkey he could now fulfill **לא תחרש בשור ובחמור יחדיו**; you shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. Sitting in my home in Frankfurt, I would have never dreamed that I would be so fortunate to fulfil this!

R' Tzaddok Hakohen of Lublin ZT"L (Pri Tzaddik) would say:

"In the entire parsha of Bikkurim and Viduy, we do not find the letter **ס** which represents the Satan (**סמאל**). This is because this parsha is comparable to a son speaking and pleading with his father. Fortunately, the Satan cannot interfere during such a tender and emotional period of time."

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

ונשארתם במתי מעט ***You will be left few in number.*** *(28:62)*



The *Klausenberger Rebbe, zl*, made his home first in New York following the tragedies that he endured in the European Holocaust. Not to sit idle, he understood that his purpose in life at that time was to give comfort to the survivors and build for the future. He set himself to establish institutions of Torah and *chesed*.

Institutions are not built on dreams. He knew that soliciting funds was a vital part of his mission. To this end, he was prepared to travel to other American cities in search of supporters to help him realise his dreams. During one of his fund-raising trips, he was traveling by train, sitting in the corner of the carriage, reciting *Tehillim*. The train stopped at a station to allow travellers to disembark and others to alight the train.

A middle-aged gentleman, clearly unobservant, entered the car in which the *Rebbe* was traveling and sat down across from the *Rebbe*. He noticed the *Rebbe* reciting *Tehillim* and could not refrain himself from speaking out.

"You are still wasting your time reciting *Tehillim*? I came from a city of righteous men like you. Despite having been raised in an observant home, I was spiritually quite distant from them. Yet, they all perished and I survived! All of the observant, G-d-fearing, good Jews died, while I lived. Can you explain that? That is when I decided that this was not for me."

The *Rebbe* listened to the man and suddenly broke out in bitter weeping. The man was visibly upset, "Why are you weeping?" The *Rebbe* looked at the man and amidst his copious tears, said, "I, too, was the last of my family and my community. We had the finest and the greatest individuals whose entire lives revolved around serving the Almighty; yet they all were murdered and I survived. Should I not weep?"

When this newly-assimilated Jew took note of the *Rebbe's* reaction, his extraordinary humility, he, too, began to weep, to the point that he buried his head in the *Rebbe's* loving embrace – as both continued to mourn the many who were no longer able to weep. This experience altered what had become the man's downward spiral and brought him back to his pre-World War II level of observance. The man was inspired by the *Rebbe's* humility.

I think the *Rebbe* was intimating another message to this man. So many righteous Jews perished, and only a handful survived. Does this mean that the survivors were more worthy? Absolutely not! Hashem has His reasons.

One thing is for certain: if Hashem allowed one to live when so many had died, then He obviously expects something of the survivors. "We have a mission!" the *Rebbe* was telling the man. "Otherwise, why should we live, when so many others – more worthy than we; died? He expects us to carry on, to rebuild, to inspire, not to weep and mourn. He certainly does not expect us to renege our *Yiddishkeit*!"

"People use the excuse, when they do something wrong, that they are only human and humans are not angels. Indeed, they are not - they are much greater!" ~ R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel Zt'l (The Alter of Slabodka).

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

Imrei Yoisher – Devorim Rabbah 7:12 ואולך אתכם

Hakodosh Boruch Hu has a greater love for His child Klal Yisroel, than a man of flesh and blood has for his child. A Parent will generally have his child nursed for two or three years, however, Hakodosh Boruch Hu sees to it that His children, Klal Yisroel are nourished through their old age and beyond.

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־דִּבְרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם לְמַעַן 29:8 -מהר״א מבעלזא
תַּשְׂכִּילוּ אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּן: ***And you shall observe the words of this covenant and fulfil them, in order that you will succeed in all that you do.***

One who studies the Torah portion of the Korbon Olah, is as if he brought a Korbon Olah. The same applies for all Korbonos. We can take this one step further – that if one learns the portions of the Torah that discusses the punishments, then it is as if he received those punishments and there is no longer a need for him to get punished.

If one studies the Torah well, and learns all the laws and its punishments, then he will be successful for he will not need any punishments.



28:47 תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה׳ אלקיך בשמחה

The Chasam Sofer asks, "What is the first mitzvah that a bar mitzva boy is mechayev in?" Talmud Torah, Tefillin, Kibud av v'eim?

To be besimcha!

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

שמע קולנו ה' אלקינו Hear our voice, Hashem, our G-d.



Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, notes that we do not say "Hashem, hear our *tefillah*," rather we plead, "Hear our voice." *Koleinu*, our voice, does not mean the *sound* of our *tefillah*, since the *Shemoneh Esrai* is recited quietly. There is no voice (so to speak) to hear.

It must mean (says the *Rav*) that the *tefillah* to which we refer when we say *Shema Koleinu* is a reference to the *kavanah*, intention, and thought one has when he prays. We ask Hashem to not simply listen to our voices, but to our *kavanah*, the intent, that accompanies our voices.

Indeed, the true meaning of the *tefillos* which we recite are given their true meaning via our voices – the thought and emphasis which we inject into our prayer.

Rav Schwab employs a well-known analogy of a father who comes to his *Rav* with a complaint concerning his son who went off to *yeshivah*. "Father, send money!" How dare he send such an audacious letter? The father presented the letter to the *rav* and said, "Look, do you see what my son wrote to me? The sheer *chutzpah* of the boy!"

The *rav* took the letter and began to read it. He then looked at the father and said, "You did not read this letter properly. In a trembling and pleading voice, the *rav* read the letter as a plea from the son begging his father to please send him some money. Upon hearing the *rav's* rendition of the very same letter that he had just read, the father broke down in tears: "I cannot refuse such a heart-wrenching plea for funds." It is all in the reading.

Likewise, we ask Hashem to listen to the tone and inflection of our prayers, because they take on a completely new meaning once they are delivered pleadingly and with supplication. Indeed, when we rattle off our prayers like the caller at an auction, they have very little meaning.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וְהָיָה אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לִשְׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל־הַקְּלָלוֹת



Although the parsha of the Tochacha is replete with terrifying klalos (curses), the **Zohar Hakadosh** expounds that each klala has within it a beracha as well.

R' Meir Premlishaner zt"l says that this idea is hinted in our parsha as well. The Tochacha has 676 words. To counteract these words of klala, the Shem Havaya (numerical value of 26), known as the Shem of Rachmanus, is mentioned 26 times: 26 x 26 is also 676, equivalent to the number of words of klala, symbolizing that everything was and is orchestrated through the Yad Hashem, our quintessential Av Harachamim.

This explains the following anecdote. The son of one of the great Rebbes once fainted while listening to the harsh words of the Tochacha being read. When revived, he was asked why he fainted this year more as opposed to any previous one.

He responded, "The past years, my father, the Rebbe lained. When he lained, I only heard words of beracha. This year, in his absence, a different baal korei lained. Now I heard curses and that is precisely why I passed out."

With this idea, we can understand why on Pesach during Maggid we recite the posukim of bikkurim from Parshas Ki Savo regarding our ordeals in Mitzrayim and not the posukim from Shemos that talk about Geulas Mitzrayim.

Only after the geula can we look back and realize that even during the rough times, we were always under the ever-protective watch of Hashem. And ultimately when Moshiach comes, we will realize the same. May all of our lives be filled with shirah to Hashem Yisbarach for all that He does, and may we revel in His goodness, as we read in this week's parsha, **ושמחת בכל הטוב.**

Acts Of Violence

The advent of violence, hatred and incitement against Jews living in Eretz Yisroel did not begin with the State of Israel in 1948. For many years before, the Arabs had been carrying out acts of violence against the small Jewish population of Palestine who lived in a few select cities.

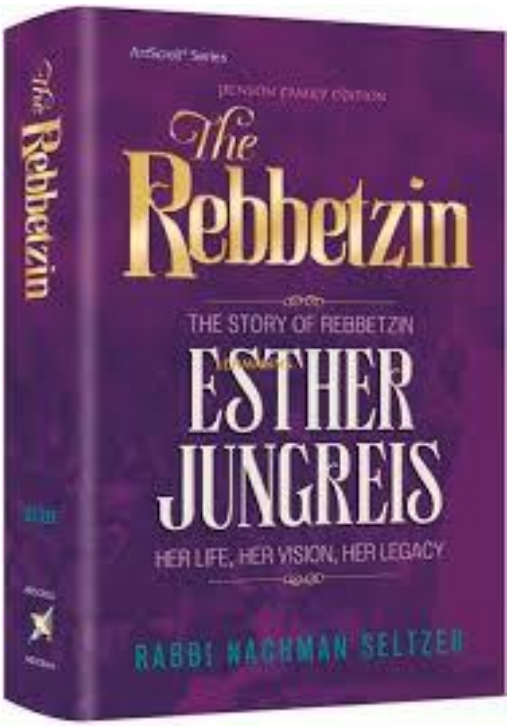


After the massacre of 1929, **R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l**, chief rabbi of the old Yishuv in Jerusalem, issued a touching appeal to the Arab population to live in peace with the Jewish community. On one occasion, R' Yosef Chaim was walking to the Kosel. An Arab storekeeper noticed them and threw a rotten orange at them. R' Yosef Chaim turned to the Arab and exclaimed, "Todah Rabba!"

The Arab did not understand what he had shouted and chased after them to find out. The person accompanying him told the Arab that the rabbi had said "Thank you." The Arab was stunned and said, "Thank you? For what?"

R' Yosef Chaim replied, "Thank you for throwing an orange at me - and not a rock!" The Arab was embarrassed at what he'd done to the holy rabbi and from then on, he would extend special honour to the chief rabbi whenever he passed his store.

Gratitude



One of the first and most successful kiruv organiztions in the U.S. is Hineni, founded by the dynamic Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis a"h.

The organization was an instant success and the Rebbetzin was asked to speak and engage with people at many events all over the world. She recalls one very special event that she was asked to speak at. One day, she received a call from Shlomo Levin, the Israeli consul in New York. He said, "Rebbetzin, I heard you speak at Madison Square Garden in NYC, and I think that our troops in Israel would greatly benefit from your message." Shlomo had sent a publicity shot of Rebbetzin Jungreis, mike in hand, taken at Madison Square Garden, to the Israeli Army Entertainment Corps, and they mistakenly thought that she was a singer.

Some weeks later, she received a call from army headquarters in Tel Aviv asking how many performances she was prepared to do. She was so moved by the fact that they had invited her to speak - or so she thought - that she had difficulty finding words, and in a voice choked

with tears, she accepted. Well, it took some clearing up before the army agreed to do a half hour of music before she gave a speech to the troops.

With great Siyata D'shmaya, she found a band from Miami willing to play for free for a half-hour, and although she didn't know how they played, she trusted that all would be well. In fact, it went even better than expected and the band was great. She became an overnight success in Israel.

Invitations began pouring in from various army bases. Her plan had called for a ten-day tour, but the pressure was on to extend her visit. There was just one problem: the musicians from Miami had to return to the States, and there was no one to replace them.

"Don't worry," her husband **R' Meshulem Jungreis zt"l**, told her, "Hashem will send you someone!" And He did! There were some yeshiva boys in the lobby who wanted to speak to her. "Rebbetzin," one of the older boys said, "we are yeshiva students and we have our own band. We came to welcome you to Jerusalem and to offer our services." "That's wonderful," she said. "How did you know I needed a band?" "Well, actually, we didn't know. We just wanted to participate and help." He looked at the Rebbetzin and continued, "But there is another reason as well.

A few years ago, I lived in New York. I was totally assimilated. I had no understanding of Judaism. My life was music, and I was on my way to Paris to continue my musical studies. I suddenly I heard a crash and the screech of brakes. I looked up, and there in the street, covered with blood, was a rabbi who had been run over by a car. I stayed with him and held his hand until the police and an ambulance arrived. "As he was lifted onto a stretcher, I noticed that his lips were moving. It seemed like he wanted to tell me something. I leaned down and bent my ear close to his lips to hear him.

Rebbetzin, you'll never believe what the rabbi said to me." For a moment, the young man paused. Then he swallowed hard and

continued his story. "'Are you Jewish?' the rabbi asked me in broken English. 'Yes,' I answered. 'I am Jewish.' The rabbi whispered again, although it was obvious that it was very painful and difficult for him to talk. He mustered all his strength and said, 'You must go to Jerusalem and study Torah!'"

"Can you imagine? Here was a rabbi, suffering from multiple fractures, his body bloody and bruised, and in his pain what does he say? He tells me to go to Jerusalem and study Torah! That experience changed my life. I realized I had met a saint, a man who was so committed to his faith that he was able to overcome his suffering to reach out to me.

So now you know why I'm here. That rabbi was your father, **R' Avraham Jungreis zt"l!** The rabbi saved my life, and I want to give back." Rebbetzin Jungreis was stunned. When he recovered from that accident, he told her of the incident and asked her to try to find the young man and thank him for his kindness in staying with him until the ambulance came. She had never located him - until now, years later, in Jerusalem - this assimilated boy turned yeshiva student came to thank her and offer his services in gratitude, and she was able to thank him in the name of her father.



בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה בָּעִיר וּבָרוּךְ אַתָּה בַּשָּׂדֶה *Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field* (Deut. 28:3)

A city has certain advantages over rural life, among them the pleasure of others' company and the availability of places of Torah and learning. Rural life also has its advantages, such as a more relaxed lifestyle, fresher air, and warmer relationships between neighbours.

Hashem's blessing is that we should be equally blessed in both locales. (**Chasam Sofer)**



Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl, once met a non-observant Jew who had absolutely nothing to do with religious practice. He did not even know the pasuk, Shema Yisrael, which is a staple in Jewish life. The man said, "I am aware of one verse from the Torah which I memorised. **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָבַדְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב מֵרֹב כֹּל**, ***"Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant"*** (Devarim 28:47).

Rav Yaakov was slightly taken aback by this revelation. The man's response is in and of itself a lesson in devotion to Hashem, and how one person's sincere service can have an enduring impact on another person's life: "Rebbe, I experienced seven levels of Gehinom. During the Holocaust, I lived in purgatory on a regular daily basis. In one of the camps in which I was incarcerated there was a holy Jew, a rabbi of distinguished lineage, whose influence upon the other incarcerates was overwhelming. As a result, the Nazis singled him out for singular punishment. This was their way of saying to us: 'Look, we control everyone – even your illustrious rabbis are putty in our hands.'



They placed a 50- kilogram stone in his hands and ordered him to carry it up a steep mountain. Once he reached the summit, he was told to carry it down. The debasing process continued on all day, as they made the holy man walk up and down the mountain for hours with the relentless heat of the sun beating down on him. During this entire time, all I heard from the man (who was none other than the holy, venerable **Klausenberger Rebbe, zl**.) was this pasuk, repeated over and over again." The Klausenberger Rebbe had already experienced the tragic loss of his wife and eleven

children. He had been beaten, degraded and subjected to painful persecution. Yet, they did not succeed in breaking this man.

Indeed, he survived and rebuilt his life, successfully establishing a kehillah, congregation, in the USA and in Eretz Yisrael. He founded a premier hospital and returned atarah l'yoshnah, the Crown of Torah, to its original place. Yet, despite all that he had suffered, all that entered his mind that fateful day was: "I am suffering because I did not serve Hashem with joy." Rather than entitlement, he felt that he owed Hashem!

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

26:15 הַשְׁקִיפָה מִמְּעוֹן קָדְשְׁךָ מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבָרֵךְ אֶת־עַמְּךָ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל

The mitzvah of Viduy Ma'asros is one of the most important mitzvos in the Torah! When a Jewish farmer sees his beautiful harvest, he must show his appreciation to Hashem. He says, "Thank You for all You have bestowed upon me! I have just distributed what I owe to the Leviim, Aniyim and to those who eat maaser in Yerushalayim. I have done everything You requested. - please gaze down upon me from Your high vantage point and give me the beracha I deserve.

The mishna in Maaser Sheini (5:13) tells us that the beracha he is requesting has nothing to do with financial prosperity at all. The farmer is now requesting "**בנים ובנות**" - sons and daughters.

My question is: In Parshas Naso, when the Kohanim bless Bnei Yisroel, they say: "**יברכך ה' וישמרך**" and Rashi explains that this beracha is referring to "**ממון**" - "may all your possessions increase." Here, by Bikkurim, though, the beracha is for children, not money. Why is this so?

My Machshava here is that this mishna is alluding to the fact that the biggest beracha we can daven for is to merit righteous children who follow the true path of yiddishkeit and are involved in Torah, mitzvos and gemilus chasadim.

In the big picture of life, a person's parnassa and finances have little meaning and very little effect on his life. It's time we realize that our biggest beracha is actually**בנים ובני בנים עוסקים בתורה ובמצות** because this is an eternal beracha. Material wealth is not ours to take with us when we leave this world. Children who live a beautiful life of Torah and Yiras Shamayim, is a blessing that lasts for generations. We continue to accumulate zechusim through their mitzvos and maasim tovim, forever - even in Olam Haba!

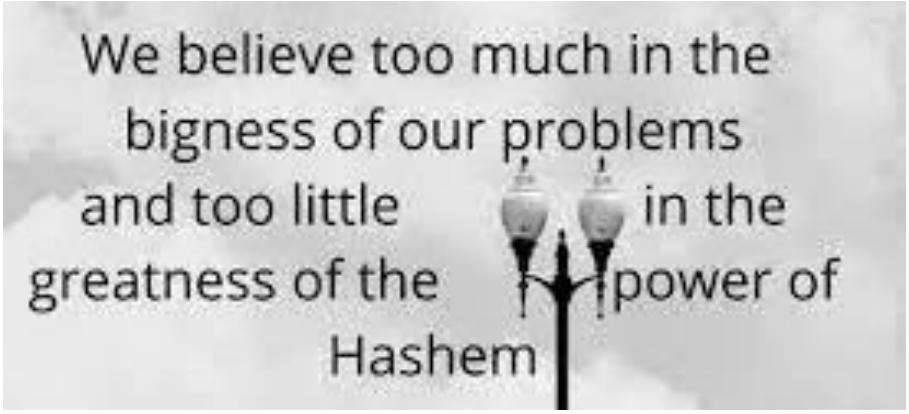
As Yeshivos and schools are starting a new zman, parents must realize what their main priorities should be, what they should be mispallel for, and where to invest their kochos. Then, on the Yom Hadin, when we come with our shopping list for the upcoming year, we will hopefully be blessed with a year of nachas, yeshuos, refuos and nechamos for gantz Klal Yisroel!

Torah Tavlin

R' Shmuel Mohilever zt"l would say: **יַכְּךָ ה' בַּשַּׁחֶפֶת וּבַקַּדַּחַת וּבַדַּלֶּקֶת** וּבַחַרְחֻר וּבַחֶרֶב וּבַשִּׁדָּפוֹן וּבַיֵּרָקוֹן. ***The L-rd will strike you with consumption, fever, illnesses with burning fevers, a disease which causes unquenchable thirst, with the sword, with blast, and with yellowing, and they will pursue you until you perish.***

We know the meaning of most of the sicknesses and diseases mentioned in the parsha, but one remains unclear: חַרְחֻר. It is possible that this disease is a common one within our people; when an unworthy person decides to become a Rav or Rebbe and be a leader over others. Woe unto us when we are caught in the plague of חַרְחֻר - which is a shortened version of **חֲצִי רַב חֲצִי רַבִּי** - 'half a Rabbi, half a Rebbe'!"

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



If you believe in Hashem, not only will you receive Hashem's *brachah;* you will live a lifestyle full of emunah, which is in itself a blessing.

A doctor once told his rav that everyone was going to his competition, and he wasn't making a living. The rav gave him this advice: "When someone calls for an appointment, tell him that the only slot open is in three months from now. People will then talk about how busy you are, and you will give off the impression of being a very sought-after doctor. This will cause your reputation to soar."

The doctor followed this advice and was very successful. One day, the rav needed medical attention and he called the doctor for an appointment. The doctor told the rav that the only slot available was in three months. The rav replied, "Are you going to play this game with me? I'm the one who taught it to you. I'm the one who made you successful!"

The *nimshal* is, Hashem grants people success. But then they become so busy; they are left without time for Torah and *tefillah*. Hashem says, "Are you doing that to me too? Remember who made you so successful!"

"Elul is the time to return to the root of the soul. When the root is repaired, all the branches are healed." ~ Maharal — Netiv HaTeshuvah.

Elul

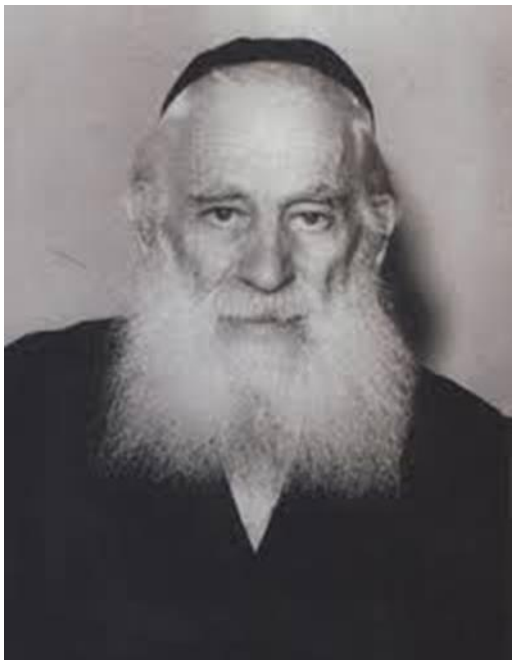


The final letters of **לֹא רָגַל עַל לְשׁוֹנוֹ** spell **אלול**

A tzaddik in our generation explains that the translation of these words is, ***"He doesn't speak lashon hara and forbidden words…"*** hinting to the importance of guarding one's speech, especially in the month of Elul.

We will be using our mouths to pray to Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; therefore, it is vital to keep this utensil holy and pure so the *tefillos* will go up before Hashem.

The Operation



To build the Ponovizh yeshiva, **Rav Kahaneman** travelled to *chutz le'aretz* to collect money.

When he came to the United States, he planned to remain there for half a year. Soon after he arrived in America, he had severe pains in his feet. People advised him to go to the hospital. The doctors diagnosed him with diabetes, "Your life is in danger," they said. "The only solution is to amputate your foot." The *roshei yeshivos* translated to Rav Kahanaman what the doctors had said and added that since it is a matter of *pikuach nefesh*, he should accept their decision.

Reb Kahanaman said, "As far as I'm concerned, there won't be an operation until the **Chazon Ish** tells me to do so." The doctors saw

the patient's resistance and asked the *roshei yeshivos* to explain what was going on. The *roshei yeshivos* explained that Rav Kahanam wants to send a telegram to the Chazon Ish, because he refuses to be operated on without the Chazon Ish's consent.

"Who is the Chazon Ish?" the doctors asked. "Is he a great doctor or a famous professor?" "No. He is a rabbi who lives in Israel, and the patient relies only on his opinion." The doctors never heard of anything like that before. The patient was in great pain, and his life was at risk, and medically speaking, he needed the operation immediately. They said, "By the time you get a response from the rabbi, it may be too late." The *roshei yeshivos* repeated the doctors' warning to the Ponovizher Rav. They added, "According to *daas Torah*, you must protect your life, as it states, **ונשמרתם מאוד לנפשותיכם**.

The Ponovizher Rav replied, "For me, *daas Torah* is the Chazon Ish. I won't go ahead with the operation until the Chazon Ish says I should." (The Ponovizher Rav was stubborn. It was this stubbornness and determination that enabled him to accomplish so much in his lifetime.) The *roshei yeshivos* sent a telegram to the Chazon Ish. They received an answer a few days later.

The Chazon Ish's telegram said, "Don't let them amputate your feet." The doctors made the Ponovizher Rav sign that he refused the operation, and that he takes responsibility for his life. They nevertheless permitted him to remain in the hospital.

The doctors were shocked when they saw the Ponovizher Rav's health improving, and slowly he regained his mobility and was able to start walking again. They never saw a medical miracle like this one, and soon the rav was discharged from the hospital. He was able to raise the much-needed funds, which would enable him to open the Ponovizh yeshiva.

He remained in America for half a year, as planned, and then returned to Eretz Yisrael. At the first opportunity, he came to the

Chazon Ish, and the Chazon Ish greeted him with a shining countenance.

The Ponovizher Rav asked, " Why did you advise against operating? The Chazon Ish replied, "I was in the middle of learning when I got your telegram. I raised my eyes to Heaven and thought, 'Oy! Ribono Shel Olam! I am in Bnei Brak, and the question came from the far away New York. How can I answer this question, when I know that if I say yes, it will be yes, and if I say no, it will be no? Your life was at stake; how could I take responsibility?

I prayed, 'Please Hashem, enlighten my eyes in Your Torah. Show me the answer to this question in Your Torah.' "I immediately looked at the Gemara *Shabbos* that was open before me. My eyes looked at the words **פסיק רישא ולא ימות** , ***'Is it possible to cut off a head and he won't die?'***

I thought to myself, 'The feet of the Ponovizh Rav aren't really feet. For him, they are like his head because the entire yeshiva is dependent on his feet. Without feet, how can he go from place to place collecting money for the yeshiva? I understood that Heaven was telling me that your feet mustn't be cut off…."

Sometimes, what appears to be the feet are really the head. Elul seems to be the end of the year, but it is really the head of the upcoming year. If we use this month for *teshuvah* and for *tefillah*, we will merit life and good in the forthcoming year.

R' Nachman of Breslov ZT"L would say:

"A person must always be happy with everything. Even his cries and heartfelt pleas to Hashem should be with happiness, and not sadness. The word '**בכיה**' - 'Cries' is found in the posuk, **בשמחה** יגילון **כל** היום!

Smile

When **Reb Avigdor Miller *zt'l*** concluded his weekly Thursday night *mussar shiur*, he gave the floor to the audience to ask any questions they want.



His thoughtful and innovative answers always captivated his audience. Once, one of the students asked, "What can we do to receive a good judgment on Rosh Hashanah for the new year?" Reb Avigdor Miller replied, **"Smile."** Then he explained, "You probably think that I'm old, and either I didn't understand your question, or I can't think coherently. But I am telling you that smiling is a wise counsel towards getting a favourable judgment on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and I'll explain it to you with a *mashal*:

Someone owned a huge store. At the end of every year, he took inventory and reviewed the expenses vs. the profits, so he will know which changes to make for the next year.

One year, after a thorough audit, the store owner decided that he has too many salespeople, and some should be laid off. The storeowner's financial advisor told him, "Perhaps you're right, and some of the salespeople can go. However, make certain you do not lay off Mr. Glee. He is an asset to the store, and you don't want him to leave. He greets everyone who comes to the store with a big smile and with kind words. People come to the store just to speak to him…"

Reb Avigdor Miller *zt'l* explained that at the end of the year, Hashem takes inventory, to see how the world is running, and some people will be removed from the world in the upcoming year. But someone who always has a smile on his face, bringing joy to others,

is an asset to the world, and Hashem will grant him life and a good year so he can continue bringing joy to others.

There are other kinds of *chesed* one can do – for example: giving *tzedakah* to the poor. But nothing compares to the merit of making people happy. As *Chazal* (*Kesubos* 111:) say, "Whoever smiles and shows his white teeth to his fellow man, it is greater than to give milk [to a thirsty person]."

Chazal say (*Avos* 1:15), **והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות**, ***"greet all your guests with a cheerful face."*** And Chazal say (*Avos* 3:12), **והוי מקבל את כל האדם בשמחה** , ***"Be joyous before everyone."***

The Shevet Mussar discusses the virtue of having long conversations with people who are down, to encourage them. He writes that he once spoke at length with someone who was very sad, and afterward the man told him that he was ready to commit suicide and that conversation saved him. The Shevet Mussar calls it "charity that doesn't cost money." But often, one can accomplish so much with less. A simple smile takes a moment, and it does so much for people.

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* famously said, "A person who frowns is a **בור ברשות הרבים** like a pit in the middle of the street." A pothole in the middle of the street can hurt many people. Similarly, someone who frowns is causing many people to be sad along with him. But when you smile, you bring joy to others.

Rashi, on the words **עשיתי ככל אשר צויתני** writes, **שמחתי ושמחתי בו** , ***"I was happy, and I made others happy."***

It seems that if you are happy and you make others happy, you've kept the most important part of the Torah.

"Things turn out the best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out."

From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל־הַבְּרָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהִשִּׂיגֻךָ And all these blessings will come upon you and cleave to you *28:2*



If the Torah tells us that Hashem's blessings will "come upon you," why is it necessary to say "they will reach you"? Isn't it obvious that they will reach you if they come upon you?

Not necessarily, explains **R' Yissachar Frand shlit'a**. Very often in life people are blessed with many wonderful gifts - health, children, food to eat, etc. - and yet they are unhappy. The blessings have indeed "come upon them" - but they have not "reached them!"

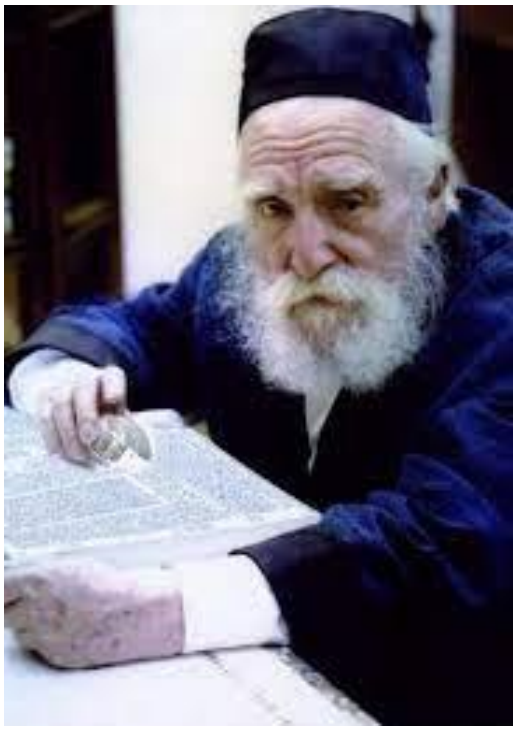
Rashi in Avos (4-1) writes that a person can be the richest of the rich but if he is not satisfied, then he is no better off than the poorest of the poor! Being satisfied is the true blessing!

EVERYTHING that happens to us is sent by Hashem. When good things happen in our lives, it is absolutely imperative that we appreciate it. If we don't, why should He continue to shower us with blessings?

Conversely, when times are tough, we must recognize that this is a wake-up call from Hashem! He is sending us a message of love and in both cases, we must make sure, "וְהִשִּׂיגֻךָ" - that we actually GET IT! The message reaches us loud and clear - for we know Hashem always loves us!

27:15 וְעָנוּ כָל־הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן

In a room in the heart of the Ma'ayanei HaYeshua Medical Centre in Bnei Brak, a unique kollel hums with the sound of Torah study. Established by **Dr. Moshe Rothschild**, founder of the hospital, the kollel is designated for Torah scholars who study complex halachic aspects of medical situations as they arise in the hospital. **R' Yisroel Zicherman shlit'a**, Rav of Brachfeld, Kiryat Sefer, is a former member of the kollel. While there, he became acquainted with a doctor who had recently arrived on aliyah from the U.S. This man had been raised in a totally assimilated family, in a part of America that was totally devoid of Judaism.



R' Zicherman was curious to know what inspired a man like that to become religious. The doctor was happy to share his remarkable story with him. "About eighteen years ago," he recalled, "I was treating a terminally ill patient. His body was gradually ceasing to function, and his days were clearly numbered. After deliberating the case with a number of specialists, I presented the following option to the patient and his family: He could undergo a complicated surgery that might lengthen his life by another six months, but it would be expensive and very, very painful.

"It is never easy for me when I must leave such intense and difficult decisions to my patients. I understood the agonizing dilemma I had thrust upon the man and waited tensely for his response. 'This is not a decision I can make on my own,' he replied serenely. 'Only **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (zt"l)** can answer that question.' I must admit, I had not heard of Rabbi Feinstein and didn't understand why an elderly rabbi needed to decide if a man should or should not undergo

a painful procedure. I offered to accompany him to Rabbi Feinstein and personally present the intricacies of the case.

In all honesty, my offer was not entirely free of ulterior motives - I was interested to see how a rabbi would deal with this situation. "I will never forget that meeting. After I had clearly explained to R' Moshe how sick the man was and the level of pain he would be experiencing if he went through with the operation, do you know what he did? R' Moshe started to cry! And not just a little bit. No! He cried and cried, heaving with anguish as tears ran down his cheeks for almost twenty whole minutes!

As a professional, I know how we gradually learn to detach, how years of experience numb our sensitivities. Yet this rabbi, who met countless people a day, was moved so intensely by my patient's plight - who was neither a relative nor a close disciple, only a student from many years ago. And why? Just because he cared so much about all people! This made a huge impression on me."

The doctor himself was misty-eyed as he recalled the meeting. "But even more than that, I will never forget what R' Moshe answered when he finished crying. In a soft voice, he asked both of us - patient and doctor - to come back the next day. He asked for some more time to think about this complex question.

"The next day, we came back and sat down with the Tzaddik. After much deliberation, said R' Moshe, he urged the man to have the painful operation. 'Go ahead and do the surgery. We will all pray on your behalf and ask Hashem to grant you many more healthy years.'

As a physician, I was surprised. The level of pain this man would experience had me convinced that the eminent rabbi would take this into consideration and decide that he should avoid it. 'Just pray and believe in G-d,' was what I thought he would say - but he didn't.

"When R' Moshe noticed my surprised look, he turned to me and said, 'In the half-year reprieve this surgery will grant our friend, he will

have the merit of answering Amen to many blessings. Each Amen will create a guardian angel for him. These angels will defend him before the Heavenly court, and he will be granted a longer life in their merit.'"

The doctor turned to R' Zicherman and said, "This meeting with R' Moshe Feinstein and his answer touched me deep within my heart. I could see that R' Moshe understood how hard the operation would be for my patient. But he felt it would be worth it so the man could live longer in order to answer more Amens. In fact, R' Moshe felt that the man's Amens would have the power to guard him from bad things! At that moment, I realized that I must learn more about Torah and mitzvos and strive to emulate a righteous man like R' Moshe."

"Incidentally," the doctor added, "My patient had his operation and he did live longer - just as R' Moshe had predicted!"

The Secret of Life

A Hebrew Sunday school once took a group of kids on an overnight trip as an "ice-breaker" for the upcoming school year. The kids built a bonfire and together with their madrichim, sat around singing songs and playing games. At one point, they went around the circle, and everyone had to say a little something about themselves. Most kids basically said the same thing, nothing too profound, until it came to one boy who said something pretty unique.

"I'm Zach," he said, "and I know the secret of life." "All right, Zach. Would you mind sharing this with us?" Zach responded, "Last summer, I went to an overnight camp with a bunch of friends. One night, I overheard the boy who slept on top of me, mumbling to himself. I asked him if everything was all right and he told me that every night before he goes to sleep, he talks to G-d. Every night, he asks Hashem a question. 'Why did You have to make me different?

Why do my parents have to be divorced?' "Suddenly, another boy exclaimed, 'I do the same thing! I ask Hashem why my sister had to die in a car accident.' 'And why my brother is mentally disabled,' said a third." "Everyone in the bunk revealed something they weren't happy about or had a claim against G-d."



Zach concluded, "And that's the secret of life, to know that everyone has challenges - ***life isn't perfect***. However, it's not the situation that defines the person, it's how he or she responds to it!"

The terrifying curses listed in this parsha have been felt by Jews throughout the millennium. And yet, "Am Yisroel Chai" - the Jewish Nation still lives. When faced with suffering and terrible trials, how have we responded? We stand up to the challenges - to stand the test of time.

The Chortkover Rebbe, R' Yisroel Friedman zt"l (quoted in Taam V'daas) would say:

Chazal tell us that the mitzvah of Tzedaka is the only commandment where Hashem mainly considers the fact that one helps a poor person regardless of his intentions while doing the mitzvah.

With Bikkurim, too, because one has given tithes and charity, he declares that even if Hashem regards these mitzvos from His high place in Heaven and finds his intentions inadequate, he should still be blessed for doing them."

28:10: וְרָאוּ כָּל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ וְיָרְאוּ מִמֶּךָּ

Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of the L-rd is called upon you, and they will fear you.



Reb Yerachmiel Boyer, told the following story: "I once lost my wallet. It contained a large sum of cash. I searched tirelessly, but all my efforts were in vain. "A few days later, I received a telephone call from a man I didn't know, a resident of Tel Aviv. He told me that he found my wallet, and that I could pick it up at his home.

"When I arrived, I realized that this honest person was an irreligious Jew, who not only did not observe the mitzvos, but during the conversation, he made it clear that he didn't respect the Torah or anything to do with religion.

I was stunned: Why had such a man decided to return such a large amount? How could he resist the lure of easy money? "That's when he explained things to me: 'When I found your wallet and saw all that money, I decided to keep it for myself. I later opened it again and saw a photograph of a rabbi inside. As I looked at the photograph, I began to shake with fear and I realized that I couldn't keep the money, that I must do the right thing and return it to its owner.'"

Reb Yerachmiel asked to see the picture. The person in the photograph who "scared" an irreligious man into doing the right thing was the mashgiach **R' Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l**.

The Seforno here applies the Gemara (Yuma 69a) which tells how Shimon the Kohen Gadol went out to greet Alexander the Great, upon his arrival in the Holy Land. At the sight of Shimon, the great

conqueror fell prostrate at his feet, and explained to his astonished companions that the image of the Jewish high priest was always with him in battle, fighting for him and leading him to victory.

This is the amazing effect of this blessing: All a gentile or ignoramus needs is to gaze upon the face of a Tzaddik and he will do the right thing.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

26:11 וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ

Then, you shall rejoice with all the good that the L-rd, your G-d, has granted you.



Chazal describe the great celebration of bringing bikkurim in a beautiful basket up to Yerushalayim and handing it to the Kohen. People from each city along the way would stop working and joyously play music and dance, celebrating and honouring the people who were bringing the bikkurim.

R' Mordechai Gifter ZT"L asks a question: With regard to the bikkurim, the Torah commands us: " **וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב** " - "*And you shall rejoice with all the goodness.*"

Do you really think the Torah has to command us to be joyous? A person bringing bikkurim couldn't be happier! Just seeing everyone singing, clapping and dancing, partaking in his simcha ... this alone causes him great joy, like a chosson and kallah!

The answer, said R' Gifter, is that although he may be very happy - but in his mind he is thinking, "Look at the luscious fruit my friend is bringing next to me! Look in his basket - his fruit is much nicer than mine."

At that moment, his simcha becomes diminished. Therefore, the Torah tells him that after he brings his bikkurim to Yerushalayim, it is important that he is happy! " **וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב** - be happy with the good Hashem gave YOU and don't be jealous of your neighbours.

Later, in the Tochacha, the Torah states that although Bnei Yisroel enjoyed prosperity and all they desired, they didn't serve Hashem, "**בשמחה ובטוב לבב**" - with happiness. However, the Torah adds two extra words - "**מרב כל**".

Bnei Yisroel weren't happy because they didn't understand the meaning of **מרב כל** .

R' Avraham Pam ZT"L used to say: "People are looking for the city of happiness, but don't realize that happiness is in the state of mind."

May we all be happy with the gifts Hashem bestows us with.

The Letter

Towards the latter half of the 19th century, two of the greatest Chassidic Rebbes, were also the greatest of friends.

As youngsters, **R' Avraham Twersky ZT"L** (Maggid of Trisk), son of R' Mordechai (Mottel) of Chernobyl ZT"L, and **R' Menachem Mendel Kalish ZT"L**, son of R' Yitzchok of Vorka ZT"L formed a pact of friendship that was to last a lifetime - indeed, they died just a few months apart.

As the two boys grew older and eventually inherited their respective chasidic dynasties, maintaining contact became all the more difficult. R' Mendel lived in Vorka, Poland, while R' Avraham lived in

Trisk, Ukraine. The distance between the two was a half-day's wagon ride and it often took weeks for letters to reach one another.

R' Mendel's personal attendant, a caring young man by the name of Moishele, saw his Rebbe's distress and offered to travel every week back and forth to deliver correspondence between the two.

And so it went. Each week, very early Friday morning, Moishele would set out from Vorka to deliver R' Mendel's letter to his dear friend, the Trisker Maggid. He would arrive in the morning hours and hand-deliver the letter to the Maggid. Then, he would wait for the Maggid to read the letter and reply.

Often it would take a while until the Maggid returned from his study, eyes red from tears, his quivering hand holding the magnificently crafted response in a special sealed envelope. Moishele would take the letter, turn his wagon around and deliver the response to the Vorka Rebbe, and that letter, too, evoked the same emotional response: tears of joy and meaning filling his Rebbe, R' Mendel's, eyes.

Moishele felt privileged to do his job and carried it out faithfully every week for many years. During that entire time, he never dared to open the letters and violate the intimate bond between the two Tzaddikim. Until one Friday morning, after Moishele had left Vorka with his Rebbe's letter, he was suddenly struck with a bizarre urge to open the letter and read what the Tzaddik wrote to his lifelong friend. "Perhaps, I can learn from the words of the righteous," he rationalized.

Carefully, so as not to ruin the seal, he opened the envelope. He looked inside and was shocked to find .... nothing! It was a completely blank piece of paper! At first he felt confused, maybe he took the wrong envelope, but he was sure he had not made a mistake. If so, was this some sort of trick that his Rebbe had been playing on him all of these years?



Without a word, Moishele carefully placed the "letter" back into the envelope, sealed it and delivered it to the Trisker Maggid. Like clockwork, the Maggid went into his study, and a half-hour later, misty-eyed and filled with emotion, he emerged from his study and returned a sealed envelope to be delivered to his friend, R' Mendel of Vorka.

At this point, Moishele could not wait to leave the Maggid's house and race back into the forest, where he hurriedly opened the envelope and stared at its contents. Again ... nothing! A blank piece of paper!

Moishele was mortified and felt pangs of hurt and mistrust. All this time, had he been sacrificing for his Rebbe to travel every Friday in hot summers and cold winters as part of some practical joke at his expense? "What is this - a game?" he wondered bitterly.

The entire Shabbos he could not contain his displeasure. On Motzei Shabbos, R' Mendel called him in to his study. "Moishele, my dear shammas, you seem agitated." He asked softly, "What seems to be the problem?" "Problem?" he responded. "Well, those letters I've been carrying back and forth between Vorka and Trisk. I admit it - I looked this Friday. I opened the envelope and there was nothing in it! Just blank paper! What kind of letter is that?"

R' Mendel did not flinch. "The Torah," he explained, "has black letters written on white parchment. The black letters represent the words that are expressed - the mitzvos, the laws, the morals, the love Hashem has for the Jewish people. The white - the blank spaces - however, contain the messages that are much deeper. This is how Hashem expresses His love for us which is so great, and which bursts forth to such an extent, that it cannot possibly be put into words."

R' Mendel's eyes welled up with tears as he looked at his contrite shammas. "Moishele, you must understand. When I correspond with my dear friend, we usually express our words through the black letters. This week, however, our messages were so deep, so intense. This week, we wrote with the white parchment. We expressed an emotion that transcends letters!"

Chacham Rabbeinu Dovid ben Zimri ZT"L (Teshuvos Radvaz) would say: "Why are no words of consolation included among the curses mentioned in Parsha Ki Savo, as they are among the curses mentioned in Parshas Bechukosai?

There is no need for added words of consolation in Parsha Ki Savo, for a consolation is already included, as there is no posuk among the curses that does not contain Hashem's Name, which demonstrates His mercy. This tells us that these curses occur through the attribute of mercy. There is no greater consolation than this.

R' Chaim Yossel Kofman zt"l (Machsheves HaLev) would say: - The halacha is that when a person goes down to his garden and sees the first ripe fruit, he puts a **גמי** - a red thread, around it, and declares, **הרי זה ביקורים** (Rashi).

What is the significance of a red thread? Well, first of all, a red thread is well-known to be a segulah against the evil eye (ayin hara). But even more than that, the letters of the word **גמי** spell out, גדולים **מעשי ה'** - ***Great are the acts of Hashem***. In essence, this is how a yid expresses his hakaras hatov, his gratitude to Hakadosh Boruch Hu. By declaring that his bikkurim fruit did not grow because of MY work – **כחי ועוצם ידי** - but rather, it was all a gift from Hashem."

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

26:11 וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה׳ אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ

Then, you shall rejoice with all the good that the L-rd, your G-d, has granted you.



If there is a mitzvah in the Torah to be happy, why are so many people depressed? What is the cause of so much unhappiness in the world today and how can we combat this miserable phenomenon which does not allow us to serve Hashem properly?

The Steipler Gaon ZT"L gives the following explanation. He says that years ago people grew up with less. Children did not get EVERYTHING they want. People knew how to tolerate hunger, hardship and even suffering.

Nowadays, children from a very early age expect their parents to give them everything they want. And if they don't get it, they feel deprived because everyone else's parents are giving their kids whatever they want. Even when people are blessed with so much, it does not make them happy because this abundance is taken for granted. When all one's needs are met, that is the norm. When one thing goes wrong, it is a catastrophe, because it's "not supposed to be like that."

Although parents think that they are doing the right thing by giving their kids everything, they are neglecting their "spiritual training" - to APPRECIATE all that they have.

If you want to rejoice - " **וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב** " - with all the good that you have, you must remember - it is all from Hashem and He knows

exactly what you need! If you want to be miserable, the formula is ... take everything for granted! If you want to be happy ... appreciate everything you have!

וְעָנָה כָל־הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן 27:15



A family living in Ashdod underwent the torment and trauma associated with the terminal illness of their wife/mother. Upon her passing, her children felt the need to take upon themselves a specific good deed, as an elevation for her soul.

After considerable thought and deliberation, they decided that each family member would recite blessings of food out loud, for others to hear in order to say Amen. A powerful and wonderful idea.

It was a hot summer's day when one of the young daughters came home from school and felt terribly thirsty. She opened the refrigerator and poured herself a glass of water. She realized that no one was home to answer Amen to her blessing. She decided to wait, but of course, as anyone who ever wanted something so badly and could not have it knows, if you tell yourself you cannot have it, you want it all the more! Her mouth quickly went dry. She began to feel weak and needed to sit down. She rationalized that all she needed was a small sip and she'd be fine. But her inner nobility shone forth and she would not - dare not - make the simple beracha without anyone there to answer Amen.

She vacillated in this state for what seemed like an eternity, battling her desires and inclinations like a valiant lioness. It took

close to two-and-a-half hours before anyone came home, but in the end, her monumental effort paid off - and she won the battle!

That very same night, the little girl had a dream and her deceased mother came to her with a shining countenance. Beaming with angelic radiance, she told her, "Know my daughter, the fact that you overcame your thirst and waited two-and-a-half hours for someone to answer Amen made a tremendous impression in the Heavenly spheres. Because of your deed, it was ruled that a good decree will be bestowed in place of a negative one. That decree is this:

One of your classmates whom you know well, is very ill with a terrible sickness. In the merit of the good deed you performed it was decreed in Heaven that your classmate would merit a complete recovery....."

Early the next morning, the girl awoke in a frenzy, the image of her mother fresh in her mind. She rushed to tell her father about her dream. Her father, who had not known about his daughter's noble deed of the previous day, was impressed with her restraint, as well as her precise recall of the dream's details. However, as no one had any inkling that this particular classmate was ill, he told her that he would need to look into the matter in greater depth.

In the late morning hours, the father picked up the phone and called the classmate's father, casually asking him about the wellbeing of his family and especially his daughter. After a brief pause, the man answered that everything is fine but wanted to know why he is asking. The widowed father revealed to him that he had heard; that his daughter is ill. The classmate's father was in shock! How could he have known this information? The whole matter was kept top secret! The man told him the development of how this knowledge came about and the vivid, life-like dream that his daughter had seen the night before. Then, he revealed the second half of the message: In the merit of her good deed, the sick little girl would merit a full and complete recovery!

Well, it was mutually agreed that this matter was beyond their scope and the two fathers wasted no time in traveling to Jerusalem, to discuss the matter with their Rebbe and spiritual leader (according to one version of this story, it was **R' Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlit'a**, leader of the Breslover Chassidim in Jerusalem).

The Rebbe listened to the entire story and instructed that the sick child be taken for re-evaluation. On the same day the girl was scheduled for her first chemotherapy treatment, new scans showed miraculous results: the little girl was totally clean, without the slightest trace of any illness! Doctors and parents alike were stunned into awed submission.

They all agreed that the ways of Heaven are truly unfathomable. And the power of obstinately observing a mitzvah can miraculously alter nature!

R' Moshe Sternbuch Shlit'a (Taam V'Daas) would say: ***וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ 'And you shall rejoice in all the good which Hashem your G-d has given you.'*** The good which one possesses is of no value if he takes it only for himself and does not share it equally with those less fortunate. When one is ready to share in the bounty which Hashem has given him, then he is truly in possession of 'all the good.'

One must implant in his mind that whatever he possesses is a gift from Hashem. This gift is given to him on the condition that he exercise his ownership over it properly, by sharing it with those who are less fortunate, thereby bringing joy into their lives."

"Your heart is the one place in the world that Hashem can only enter if you let Him in." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

28:47 תַּ֗חַת אֲשֶׁ֤ר לֹא־עָבַ֙דְתָּ֙ אֶת־יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹקיךָ֔ בְּשִׂמְחָ֖ה וּבְטֽוּב לֵבָ֑ב

Because you did not serve the L-rd, your G-d, with happiness and with gladness of heart.



The posuk tells us that the mitzvah of bikkurim takes effect when Bnei Yisroel enter Eretz Yisroel, however, in reality, the mitzvah only began to apply after the conquest and division of the land, unlike other mitzvos which were kept immediately upon entering the land, such as challah. Why was it necessary to wait 14 years to express joy and thankfulness to Hashem?

R' Avraham Pam ZT"L explains that the nature of human beings is to forget how fortunate we are and complain about things that we really should be grateful for! For example, a chosson who dates for a number of years, with many aggravations and disappointments, finally finds the right one, and is thrilled with all the wonderful information he hears about his new kallah. During sheva brachos he is even more excited to see the beautiful middos of his wife. He is the happiest man in the world! He has no words to express his appreciation to Hashem.

But after a number of months things begin to change. His wife's many virtues become "normal", and he starts to take her for granted, or worse, complains about her and becomes resentful.

The key to a happy life is to remember the difficulties, the loneliness, the worry, the anguish and the pain of whatever situation

one is taking for granted now. The mitzvah of bikkurim could only be fully realized after 14 years of trouble and toil. Hashem wanted us to be appreciate what we have, and to never forget the fact that we weren't always so lucky. Eretz Yisroel must never be taken for granted!

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

26:11 וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה׳ אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ

Then you shall rejoice with all the good that the L-rd your G-d, has granted you.



This parsha is all about being happy! Twice we are commanded to rejoice and are told that all the horrific curses will come about if we don't serve Hashem with joy! This is the point! We MUST be happy, for otherwise we will be punished!

Nowadays, with the financial crisis, shidduch crisis, youth at risk, sholom bayis issues ..... the list goes on R"L, the question is glaring: How can we truly serve Hashem with simcha?

The Torah is timeless, and it applies to us today as it did the very day it was given. Thus, we ask: With all of today's problems surrounding us - how can we be truly happy?

The beginning of the parsha discusses the mitzvah of bikkurim, bringing up the first fruits to Yerushalayim, as an expression of gratitude for the bounty that we are given. GRATITUDE. That is the secret formula (it's not a secret, really, so why not share it with everyone you know!) to being truly happy.

When the first olive sprouted, a red string was tied to it, designating it as bikkurim. At that time, it was not known if the entire crop would grow in abundance. Why didn't they wait to designate bikkurim when they knew the crop was good?

Because to them, it made no difference. They were happy and grateful that they had SOMETHING now to eat. It didn't matter what would be the outcome. They were happy now!

We are all affected by the harsh world we live in today. Yet, if we focus on what we do have, we will realize that we have so many things to be happy about. Simcha comes from "**שם מוח**" - putting our minds in the right place. Thinking about all that we have and being grateful for it.

In this way, we can fill our lives with the blessing of serving Hashem with joy!

The Gerrer Rebbe, R' Yitzchok Meir Alter of Ger ZT"L (Chiddushei Harim) would say: "A Jewish marriage is celebrated with a week of sheva berachos. Each day, the bride and groom eat two meals at which seven blessings are read after each meal. If one adds up all the berachos - seven days, seven berachos twice a day (7x7x2) - we have a total of 98 blessings.

Each time a new house is established in Klal Yisroel, 98 berachos are recited, to neutralize and counteract the 98 curses found in the Tochacha in Parshas Ki Savo!"

R' Chaim Kreiswirth ZT"L



Reb Chaim fled from Poland in the early stages of the second world war to the city of Vilna, which the Soviet Union transferred to the Lithuanian authorities in October of 1939. The independence was short-lived, however, as the Soviets quickly occupied Lithuania and in August 1940 incorporated Vilna, along with the rest of Lithuania, into the Soviet Union. On June 22, 1941, Germany attacked Soviet forces in eastern Europe and captured Vilna. R' Chaim fell into the hands of the accursed Nazis and he was shipped off to one of the notorious labour camps.

R' Chaim was always looking out for his fellow Jew. Although there were many sick individuals in the camp, there was one man whose condition had become utterly appalling. He was stricken with numerous diseases, including leprosy and boils all over his body, and had been blinded when the Germans thought it would be sport to poke out his eyes. He was a miserable wretched sight to behold and consequently was shunned by his fellow inmates and left to die in misery and filth.

R' Chaim would not allow this to happen, and he befriended the young man and attempted to clean his wounds, assist him and nurse him back to health. He gave up his own meagre rations to feed him and washed and dressed his wounds. He never considered his own frail health and the chance that he may contract a disease as well. All he cared about was seeing this man back to health.

Miraculously, he succeeded beyond all expectations, and although the man remained blind, he regained his health and beat the

diseases. R' Chaim's actions became legendary and wherever he walked, people would talk to him and discuss their issues.

R' Chaim was a "people's person" and would speak energetically to everyone, providing hope and encouragement even in the midst of pain and misery. R' Chaim was noticed by a passing S.S. overseer who felt that perhaps this popular young man was enjoying himself too much in the "care" of the Nazi labour camp.

The S.S. lieutenant issued an order to haul him away for questioning and punishment. Guards grabbed R' Chaim and called him a spy and ordered him to be shot on the spot. As R' Chaim was being prepared for execution, he closed his eyes and offered a silent prayer to Heaven. "Master of the World, I just acted above and beyond to care for an unfortunate Jew who was sick and dying. It was with great mesirus nefesh that I helped him become well again. Now," R' Chaim voiced his silent plea with tears streaming from his eyes, "I ask that You give me my reward for that act here in this world and allow me to live in order to care for others for the rest of my life. Chazal tell us: 'One mitzvah follows another mitzvah,' but if I die now, all my future good deeds will die with me."

R' Chaim's thoughts cantered on survival, rather than surrender or despair, and he prayed with every fibre of his being. "Not right here!" shouted the S.S. Lieutenant, waking R' Chaim from his reverie. The guard was ordered to take the prisoner away and shoot him outside the gates of the camp, so that no German would have to waste valuable time and energy removing the body and burying it in the camp. "Shoot the Jew and leave him to rot in the forest," was the direct order.

The guard marched R' Chaim outside the camp's gates and stood him up against a tree. All the while, R' Chaim continued praying, begging the Almighty to allow him to live in order to help others.

Suddenly, the guard's demeanour changed and he spoke in a low conspiratorial voice. "Listen, I will shoot into the air and you run away

from this place. Do you hear me?" R' Chaim nodded in shock and when the German guard inexplicably shot his pistol into the air, R' Chaim took off in a dead run.

He ran for days and days, hiding out until he somehow managed to reach safety. He lost no time in escaping Europe, and within a short time, he landed on the shores of the Holy Land. From Israel to the U.S., and for close to the last fifty years of his life in Antwerp, R' Chaim devoted his life to assisting his fellow Jews with an abundance of love, kindness and mesirus nefesh.



וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ "And you shall rejoice in all the good which Hashem your G-d has given you."

When **R' Schneur Zalman ZT"L of Liadi** began to disseminate his teachings, many young men flocked to him and became his ardent followers, despite the prevailing opposition to the chasidic movement. They found that "chassidism" injected a new vitality and joy in serving Hashem that was lacking in "establishment" Judaism.

Among the newly converted chassidim were two sons of a leading Torah scholar of the time. One day, they approached the Baal HaTanya with a dilemma that had been on their minds for some time: should they attempt to win over their father to the chasidic approach to serving Hashem, as they had found it spiritually fulfilling, or is he perhaps too set in his ways to change his lifestyle. "Tell me," asked the Rebbe, "does your eminent father perform mitzvos with joy?"

"Every year," related one of the sons in reply, "when we finish building our sukkah, our father climbs onto a bench and kisses every piece of the schach." "In that case," said the Baal HaTanya, "don't worry - he's fine just the way he is!"



R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"L (Kol Rom) would say:

"Why does the Torah tell us that Bnei Yisroel should eat and rejoice at the site of Mount Eival, the mountain reserved for the admonitions? Why not by Mount Gerizim, where the blessings were uttered?

This teaches us a most powerful lesson. One should realize that when he is visited by difficulties in life, it should not be viewed as a negative situation. Difficulties offer numerous positive effects, to cleanse, to refine, and to bring one to humility.

Similarly, this is a lesson in bringing up our children. One who spoils his children, offering them all of life's conveniences and none of the responsibilities, is preparing those kids for a most disappointing life."



27:15 וְעָנוּ כָל־הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן

A group of Israeli policemen stood on the platform in the station, boarding the train that would take them from Jerusalem to Haifa for training and drills. Loud and boisterous, they good-naturedly jostled each other and called out comments back and forth. None of them noticed the tall, imposing figure that was boarding at the same time, and even if they did, they certainly had no clue that the great **R' Eliyahu Lopian ZT"L**, was a passenger on their train.

A short time into the ride, one of the policemen suddenly felt a light tap on his shoulder. He turned around to see a man with a white beard standing next to him. It was obvious that he was a distinguished Jew. "I have a request of you," R' Elya said. "I have to recite the beracha of 'Asher Yatzar.' Could you please gather together all your friends on the train so that they may answer Amen?"

The policeman looked at the rabbi and did not know what to say. What a strange request. Say Amen? Why? What was the purpose?

His buddies would laugh at him. But when he looked into the face of the tzaddik, he recognized the serious demeanour and realized that he could not refuse the request. The honour and dignity evident in this great man's bearing left no room for hesitation.

He immediately got up and began the uneasy task of assembling the policemen. Predictably, they refused. "What did you say"? "A Beracha?" "Asher what? What's that?" "Why do we have to say Amen?" The questions came pouring forth and the poor guy who was tapped with the job of persuading his colleagues to comply with the rabbi's request had no more idea than they of what it was all about. But there was something about the man. This rabbi had impressed him deeply and he was determined to do as he had been requested.

Slowly, and reluctantly, the policemen gathered around R' Elya. Some were grinning in derision, others were winking and nudging one another with their elbows. Still others were merely curious to see what was about to happen. But what was there to lose? There was certainly nothing more interesting than this happening on the train.

R' Elya stood, surrounded by uniformed policemen. Silence fell upon the train car as he began reciting the beracha, saying it slowly, each word clearly enunciated. "Boruch Ata Hashem ... Elokeinu Melech Haolam ..." For some of the policemen, it was the first time they had ever heard a beracha being uttered. "Asher yatzar es ha'adam B'chochma ... Who created man with wisdom ..."

The intensity with which he said each word was tangible. Even the most hardened man there was filled with admiration and respect for the rabbi. Here was a Jew who was truly close to G-d. They heard how he stressed the words, passing all the world in his prayer. And when he concluded with the words "Blessed are You, G-d, Healer of all flesh and acting wondrously" - the mighty "AMEN!" that burst forth from the mouths of the spellbound policemen filled the train.

R' Elya Lopian had succeeded in touching the very core of their souls. Now, none of the policemen were laughing. They realized that it was

a truly holy being who stood before them. The policemen returned to their places, quiet and contemplative. What an experience!

What they hadn't realized until then was that the train had stopped during the lengthy beracha and they were not moving. What was the problem? No one knew and no information was forthcoming. The men became apprehensive, and a nervous tension settled over them. And then they heard.

Terrorists had laid explosives on the rail lines in an attempt to blow up the train. For some unexplained reason, as the train approached, the bomb did not explode, and the passengers were saved from certain death. When the train lurched forward once more, a collective sigh of relief could be heard throughout the train.

Chazal teach: "One who answers Amen merits having his life lengthened." R' Elya had gathered the policemen together in order to demonstrate that all the bombs in the world could be rendered powerless by the strength of one Amen.

Sheep and Shepherd - The Weekly Vort

אבד בקש עבדך כי מצותיך לא שכחתי - ***Strayed have I like a lost sheep; seek our Your servant for I have not forgotten Your commandments*** (Tehillim 119:176).

If someone loses an inanimate object, such as a wallet or piece of clothing, there is nothing that the lost object can do to be returned to its rightful owner. It cannot speak or move on its own. If sheep are lost from a flock, however, it is not only the shepherd who searches; the sheep, too, search for their master, for they feel their separation and isolation. (R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein)

In Elul, our King, our Shepherd, is in the field. He is searching for us, but we must search for Him as well.

We are commanded to, "rejoice in all the good Hashem has given you." If we experience misfortune and tragedies, it is, "because you did not serve Hashem with joy and a good heart." Simcha is not just a nice middah. It doesn't enhance one's life; it is the foundation of all spiritual success.

Chazal tell us: "*The Divine Presence does not rest only amongst happiness.*" Without Simcha, one cannot be close to Hashem, one cannot truly live as a Jew, and one cannot do Teshuvah . Hashem wants us to serve Him with SIMCHA!!

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of standing at the kever of the founder of the Bais Yaakov movement, **Sarah Schenirer A"H** (of whom **R' Aharon Kotler ZT"L** was quoted as saying, "If not for Sarah Schenirer, where would our families, our wives, our children, our Bnei Torah be?").



What I found truly amazing is what is written on her **מצבה**. She left us with five posukim which encompassed everything she stood for and all that she wished to transmit to future generations. The very first posuk, presumably the one she deemed the most important, states: **עבדו את ה' בשמחה** - "Serve Hashem with Joy." This is listed even before the second posuk of **שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד**-"*I place Hashem before me always.*"

What a crucial lesson for every Jew. The most important thing is Simcha! In fact, the words "**בשמחה**" and "**מחשבה**" contain the same letters. We must train our minds to serve Hashem only with joy!

R' Shloime Hakohen Rabinowitz ZT"L of Radomsk (Tiferes Shlomo) would say:



"If a man receives a generous gift from a mighty king, he rejoices not so much for its actual value, but more so for the fact that it came from the king himself. The main reason for this joy at the gift is the thought of who the giver is. Therefore, the Torah states: 'And you shall rejoice in all the good' not only because it is good but primarily because it is 'what Hashem Your G-d has given you' - just the thought of Who gave it to us should give us great joy!"

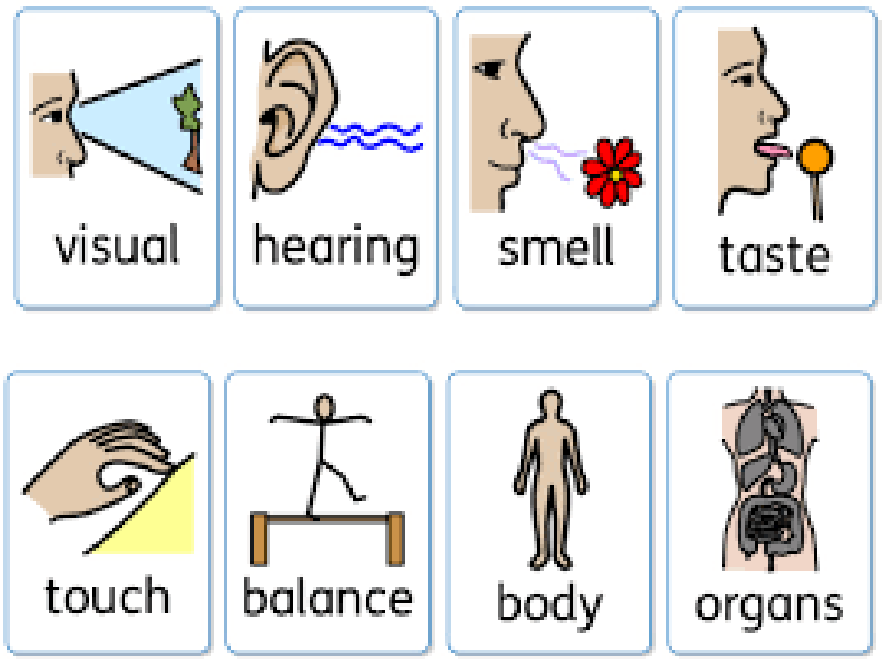
The Seven Wonders of The World

A group of Geography students was asked to list what they considered to be the Seven Wonders of the World.

Though there was some disagreement, most of the recognized "wonders" were mentioned, including the Egyptian Pyramids, Mount Everest, the Grand Canyon, China's Great Wall, and others. While gathering the votes, the teacher noticed that one student, hadn't turned in her paper yet. So she asked the student if she was having trouble with her list. The young girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many."

The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and we'll try to help." The girl hesitated, then read: ***"I think the Seven Wonders of the***

World are: 1. to touch, 2. to taste, 3. to see, 4. to hear, 5. to run, 6. to laugh, and 7. to love."



The Torah tells us in great detail, of the blessings that can and will be bestowed upon us. Sometimes, we have great blessings and don't even realize their magnitude. It is far too easy for us to look at the exploits of man and refer to them as "wonders" while we overlook all the "ordinary" things Hashem has done. In truth, though, these gifts from Heaven are anything but ordinary. The little girl had it exactly right. Our unique abilities are the true wonders of the world, and we only merit them through Divine blessing.

On July 7, 1888, R' Yaakov Yosef Joseph ZT"L arrived by ship in Hoboken, N.J

A large crowd of hopeful well-wishers awaited, to greet the newly appointed Chief Rabbi of New York. R' Yaakov Yosef refused to disembark as it was Shabbos, and the crowd waited patiently for him until after sundown. He was then escorted to his new home where a crowd of close to 50,000 gathered to great him and show their respect.

At first, R' Joseph met with much success, especially in testing shochtim and replacing those who were unqualified and doubled the number of certified shochtim in the New York City area. The new

Chief Rabbi also took an active interest in education, making periodic visits to the Etz Chaim Yeshiva to test the older students.

Within the first few weeks of his arrival, R' Joseph established a new Beis Din in New York City. However, the Chief Rabbi's exuberant popularity did not last long. The measures to strengthen kashrus caused an increase in the price of meat, chicken and matzah, something many were not willing to except. Slaughterhouse owners did not take well to their loss of authority while many Jewish housewives complained of the increase in kosher meat prices.

The Chief Rabbi was maligned, assaulted, and attacked on a daily basis, both in person and in the anti-religious Jewish media. He was accused of robbing the poor for his personal gain, and worse. It did not take long for all of R' Joseph's "enemies" to join in and attack other areas of his successes in an attempt to reverse them. Those who were offended by his efforts against Shabbos desecration attacked him.

Anti-religious demonstrations were constantly being organized throughout the Lower East Side denigrating the Chief Rabbi's authority. By the end of 1893, R' Yaakov Yosef went from Chief Rabbi to a simple mashgiach, and soon, he lost his job altogether.

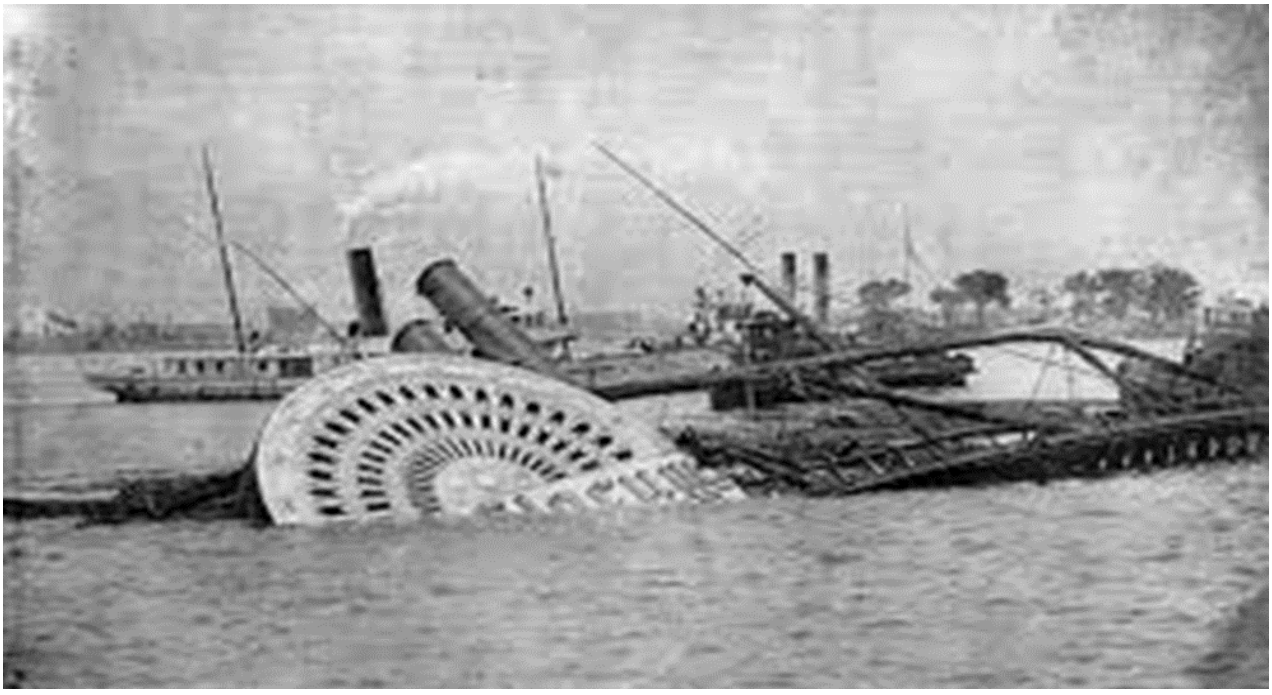
The city that had welcomed him so enthusiastically with honour and hope abandoned him, ungrateful of all the effort he initiated on its behalf, with the exception of a few. He was soon all but forgotten and after a long sickness, he died on the 24th of Tammuz, 1902.

Around 100,000 people attended R' Yaakov Yosef's funeral. The leading Torah authorities in the United States eulogized him, each one defending the late Chief Rabbi's honour, chastising the people for the way he was mistreated. The Chief Rabbi of Pittsburgh, PA, **R' Moshe Shimon Sivits ZT"L**, cried out, "R' Yaakov Yosef was only honoured twice by the people of New York City - once when he arrived and now that he is gone!"

History records, that as the funeral procession followed his bier past the printing plant of R. Hoe and Co., the mostly German workforce angrily hurled stones, metal pipes, and garbage at the procession below.

A riot unfolded and an Anti-Semitic police force of over 200 took to clubbing the attacked rather than the attackers. When the dust settled, it found scores of mourners hospitalized or arrested while the R. Hoe and Co. received a slap on the wrist.

The Almighty, however, never leaves a debt unpaid. Two years later, on June 15, 1904, more than 1,300 members of New York City's "Kleindeutschland" (Little Germany), which included the majority of the R. Hoe and Co. workforce, boarded a leisure steamboat to spend the day at Locust Grove on Long Island Sound. As the boat steamed down the East River, it somehow became engulfed in a ball of fire. The boat's captain, fearing an explosion should he dock the boat, unwisely opted to proceed at top speed to North Brother Island, a mile up ahead, further fanning the flames with the increased speed.



Although it was on the East River with its usual overcrowding of small boats, adequately stocked with lifeboats, and a few yards from shore, more than 1,020 people died by the time the boat finally docked.

Due to the tragedy, within the next few years the entire neighbourhood collapsed. The once proud German neighbourhood of 80,000 was reduced to a handful.

Ironically, most every schoolchild can recount the tragic events of the Titanic (1,500 people killed), Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (1,117 people killed), and the Terrorist attack on the World Trade Center (around 2,800 people killed), but few, even in New York, can recall the General Slocum Steamboat fire.

Hashem takes revenge on the wicked when they lack the proper respect for Torah and its scholars.



From The Desk of Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

World War I was raging in Europe, when a worried couple came to see **Rabbi Pinchas Dovid HaLevi Horowitz**, the first Bostoner Rebbe, in Boston's North End. They told him that their son had received a draft notice and, since many Americans were being shipped to the war in Europe, they feared for his life.

The Rebbe listened attentively and then asked them only one question: "Do you keep Shabbat?"

"No," they said, "we simply can't, the business, this is America...it's just impossible."

"I'll make a deal with you," the Rebbe said. "You will keep Shabbat 100 percent, and I'll promise you that your son will never go off to the war."

They hummed and hawed, talked it over, and finally took the plunge. They gave the Rebbe their solemn promise and left.

They indeed kept Shabbat conscientiously after that; but the U.S. Army kept "doing its thing." Their son soon received a notice to appear at the designated time and place for his physical examination.

His parents panicked and ran back to the Rebbe. He calmed them by saying simply: "I promised he will not go to Europe, and he won't."

However, their son passed his physical in fine form and soon had another letter: He was to appear at a specified time and place to be inducted into the Army and pick up his uniform. The parents ran back to the Rebbe. "Look, we're keeping Shabbat" but all the Rebbe would say was: "I promised you, and a promise is a promise." Another letter, another visit to the Rebbe ("A promise is a promise"), and off their son went for basic training. And so it went. Finally, one last letter: Their son was to appear in two weeks' time to board a ship with his company, destination Europe!

Again the parents ran to the Rebbe and again they received his promise. But the days ticked slowly by with no deliverance in sight. No last-minute messenger came. The parents paid the Rebbe several more visits, the last one on the very day their son was to set sail; but the Rebbe refused to get excited. He merely asked, "Are you still keeping Shabbat?" and, when they said yes, he calmly reiterated, "I promised."



On the last day, the hours ticked by. But nothing happened. They left the house for the dock. Still nothing happened. They said their tearful farewells. Nothing. Then their son, with all his shipmates, ascended the gangplank to the top of the ship. As he reached the top, he turned to wave one last, sad farewell and then it was all over.

Well, not quite. The next soldier in line, not expecting the sudden turn, accidentally pushed the man who was waving. While falling, he caught his foot in a hole in the deck. There was a small commotion at the top of the gangplank, and our friend was soon slowly carried

back down. He had twisted his ankle, and it was quite a bad sprain, one that could take weeks to heal. The young man quite literally missed the boat!

A few weeks in an Army hospital did wonders and the young man was soon up and about. He was eventually assigned to a new unit; but he never did see service in Europe.

To the Rebbe, it was an example of the power of keeping Shabbat; but his Chassidim saw it as a clear example of "*tzadik gozer v'HaKadosh Baruch Hu mekayem*", a tzadik decrees and G-d fulfills - - After all, "A promise is a promise."

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



Parashas Ki Savo opens with the directive for each person to bring of their first fruits to the Bais HaMikdash as Bikurim (26:2). There is no specific amount mentioned that should be given, and one can simply bring a kernel of wheat and fulfil this obligation.

Rav Shimon Sofer explains that the reason there is no limit is to test each person. After someone toils and invests so much time and effort to reap these fruits, will he still recognize that everything he has comes from Hashem or will he be deluded to think that his own efforts bore this fruit? His Bikurim gift will show how much recognition he has of the Real Provider, Hashem.

Torah Anytime- Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis a'h- Paving the Way



It was around wartime that my parents made the momentous decision to visit my grandparents at their home a distance away from where my family lived in Hungary. Travelling amid danger and terror, we were fortunate enough to make it there alive. Especially considering my father's long black beard and rabbinic hat, he could hardly be mistaken for a gentile. But with G-d's help, we eventually arrived safely.

It was winter, and the white snow was falling. Yet although it was cold and bitter, there was something which kept me particularly warm while staying in my grandparents' home for one week. And that was my zaidy's lap. Comfortably sitting on his knees every morning when he would return home from shul and sit down to study the Talmud, I could wish to be no other place than where I was.

Securely cuddled in the embrace of my zaidy, his swaying back and forth and melodious humming put me at ease. My bubby too provided me with hot tea and cubes of sugar, which my zaidy would dip into the hot liquid and give me. It was on the last day of our visit that I sat down on my zaidy's knees and noticed something peculiar. He was trembling. Looking upwards, I noticed that he was weeping. I was unsure what had occurred, and so I quickly jumped off my grandfather's knees and ran to my father. "Tatty," I said, "why is zaidy crying? What happened?"

Taking me by the hand, my father said, "My dear child, let us go on a walk together. Let me explain why zaidy is crying." Leading me outside, we were met by the falling flakes of snow and heaps of frost all around.

After taking a few steps, my father said, "Come my child, follow in my footsteps." We proceeded to walk for a few minutes and then came to a stop. Looking at me again, my father quietly said, "Do you understand why I wanted you to follow in my footsteps?"

"I think so, tatty. It is because the snow is so deep that you didn't want me to fall. You walked in front of me and created a path so I would be able to easily walk behind you." "Yes, my child," said my father. "That is why zaidy is crying. It is because he realized as you sat on his knees that he is not learning Torah just for himself, but he is learning Torah to make a path for you and all future generations. He is paving the way for all Jewish children for years to come. The snow is very deep, and you are going to fall many times, but every time you fall, zaidy will have made a path for you to stand up and keep on walking."

In all honesty, I did not fully comprehend the profundity of my father's comment at the time. I was just a young girl and did not know what he meant. But very soon I discovered that the snow was much deeper than I could have ever imagined. And indeed, I fell many times. But every time I fell, I remembered my father's voice, "Zaidy made a path for you to stand up and keep on walking."

Each and every Jew, no matter who he is or where he is, has had the loving and caring life of his bubby and zaidy create a path for them. The fact that we sit here today as Jews with an eternal legacy and beautiful heritage is due to their paths. And forever must we remember their vision for us and make them proud. And then no sooner than later, it will come our turn to look at our children and grandchildren and say, "My dear children, I have made a path for you. You will fall many times in life, but every time you will be able

to get up and say, "Zaidy made a path for us to stand up and keep on walking."

That is our eternal legacy as beloved grandparents, parents and children. We are to receive direction from previous generations and pass it on to the next, clearing the way for the future with love of our family, love of the Jewish people and love of Hashem.

As we approach Rosh Hashanah and look to create new paths for the upcoming year, we must remember that even if we fall, we always have a way of getting back up on our feet. And that is because we are never alone on the trail. With the warm embrace and guidance of our grandparents, parents and ultimately Hashem, we have footsteps to follow in. We can remain rest assured that no matter how many times we fall, we will always be able to find our way back on track.



Torah Anytime -Rabbi Shlomo Farhi - On My Way

As the accomplished life of **Rav Yaakov Gold z"l** came to a close and his son entered the mourning period of shiva, numerous relatives and friends paid a condolence call to comfort the family and offer words of support.

A few days later, in walked a man looking for Yaakov Gold's son. "I must tell you," he said, "that your father was someone very special. You don't know me, and I don't know you, but I just wanted to personally tell you this."

"It was a number of years ago that my mother decided she would make the trip to shul on the day of my father's yartzeit. It was only after sitting through the entire davening that she began to head back home. Arriving at the bus stop in Queens, New York, it was by then pouring rain. With no other option available, my mother took a seat amid the freezing cold. She continued to wait for the next bus, but she was not getting too far even after a long wait. "But then a

man pulled up. It was your father. 'Where are you going?' he said. 'The Lower East Side,' my mother replied. 'Really? I am also going that way. Can I offer you a ride? It is awfully cold.'

Happily taking up the offer, my mother left the biting cold and entered inside the warm car. "When your father eventually reached the Lower East Side, he said to my mother, 'You know, I also have a yartzeit today and I also live here in this neighbourhood. If you would like, next year on this day I can bring you back and forth from the shul.' Having just uncomfortably experienced what it meant to wait in frigid temperatures, my mother was elated to hear that she would not need to undergo the same process next year. And so, she graciously accepted the offer.

"Indeed, that was what happened. Every year, on the day of my father's yartzeit, your father helped my mother travel back and forth. Your father continued to do so for a number of years, until my mother passed away. I cannot tell you how much she appreciated it."

By now, Yaakov Gold's son was in tears. "You don't know how much you just comforted me," he said. Unsure what had moved the son so much, the man stood there curious. And then the son spoke up with a big smile. "Let me tell you something. My father never lived on the Lower East Side, and the day my father had yartzeit was not on that day. But now I understand.

When he saw your mother sitting on the side of the road, he came up with an idea. I am sure that my father figured that if he would tell your mother than he lives in Boro Park and taking her to the Lower East Side was out of his way, she never would have considered troubling him. So suddenly, my father had a yartzeit on that day and suddenly our house moved to a different location. But that was who my father was. When he saw someone else's need, it became his need."

Torah Treats- Rabbi Y Richtman- Thank You Forever

The Parsha starts with a beautiful expression of Hakaras Hatov by the Jewish farmer as he thanks Hashem for the new fruits which grew on his land. Rashi comments that he must make this statement to ensure that he isn't an ingrate for the kindness that Hashem showered upon him.



The Kav Hayashar quotes an idea from the Sefer Chareidim which he calls a "great insight." If Hashem saves a person from a dangerous situation or illness, he will undoubtedly be tremendously thankful to Hashem. Someone who is blessed to sit at his Shabbos table surrounded by his wife, children, and grandchildren and who has ample parnassa, a place to live, and good health should be filled with the same gushing feelings of gratitude to Hashem.

The Torah clearly instructs the grateful farmer as he grasps his basket full of fruit: OPEN UP YOUR MOUTH AND THANK HASHEM. This is a message to us as well. We have so much constant kindness showered upon us from our loving Father in Shomayim. We must show our appreciation by expressing our thanks to Hashem and singing His praises.

There was once a fellow who was miraculously saved from a difficult tzara. He wanted very much to do something for his fellow Yidden as an expression of his gratitude to Hashem. He considered opening a free loan society and went to the **Slonimer Rebbe** to get his haskamah. When the Rebbe heard the idea, he shook his head in disapproval. The man was surprised at the Rebbe's reaction.

The Rebbe explained he should not do anything except live with the constant feeling of thanks to Hashem for saving him. The Rebbe felt that if the person worked on this project, he might feel like he already showed his thanks and could forget about the kindness.

Bikurim in our Generation

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa zy'a asked, how do we bring bikurim today, when there is no Beis HaMikdash? The Torah is eternal, so there must be some way to keep the mitzvah even today.

Rebbe Bunim answered that in our generation, we can keep the mitzvah of bikurim by making the beginning of the day holy. (Instead of sanctifying the first fruits, we sanctify the first moments of the day.) After rising in the morning, the first thoughts, words, and deeds should be dedicated for avodas Hashem.

Some people read the newspaper as they sip their early - morning-coffee. (Some people check their emails ...) This isn't considered sanctifying the beginning of the day.

Ideally, a person should awaken with zrizus and prepare for Shacharis. He should daven properly, and then the entire day will be better and more spiritual, because the day is influenced by its beginning. This is the bikurim of today.

Simchah

It is important to serve Hashem with simchah. This week, the Torah writes the tochachah – ninety-eight curses. According to some commentaries, all of these curses come when people aren't serving Hashem with joy.

The Sfas Emes said that if lacking simchah brings on the curses, we can be certain that when we serve Hashem with joy, it will bring many yeshuous to the world, and lead to the ge'ulah.

On Succos, we sacrifice ninety-eight sheep (14 sheep, each day, for 7 days = 98). These ninety-eight sheep protect us from the ninety-eight curses (Bamidbar 29:18, Rashi).

The Avnei Nezer zy'a explains that it makes sense that the ninety-eight curses should be neutralized on Succos, because the curses come for not serving Hashem with joy and on Succos, we serve Hashem with joy, as it is called **זמן שמחתינו**.

Change



There was an expert tight-rope artist. When he was on the rope, high up in the air, he was almost as comfortable as a person walking on the ground. He juggled, rode bikes, and danced on the rope. "What's the hardest part?" someone asked him. "You will be surprised, but the hardest part isn't riding the unicycle, and it isn't dancing. The hardest part is when I reach the end of the rope and need to turn around."

Similarly, in life, the hardest part is turning around. Everyone is accustomed to their lifestyle. Learning new habits is extremely difficult. The main thing is that we must believe in our ability to change.

Someone said to **Reb Yisrael Salanter zy'a**, "I am set in my ways; I think I will never change." Reb Yisrael Salanter rebuked him, "Even the Satan believes that you can change. So why don't you believe that you have this ability?"

The Gemara says that when we blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah, the Satan becomes afraid. He thinks that Yidden have done teshuvah, and he is hearing the shofar of Moshiach.

Reb Yisrael Salanter told him, "If the Satan believes that we can do teshuvah, you should also believe that you have this potential.

Returning the Favour



The Mishna in Bikurim (3:8) writes that a rich man brings his bikurim in a silver or golden basket. After the mitzvah is completed, the Kohen returns the basket to him. When a poor man brings his first fruits, he uses whatever he has, presumably a very simple basket. After he completes the mitzvah, the Kohen keeps his basket.

The Belzer Rebbe asked: why is this the case, that the Kohen takes the poor man's basket? Rashi comments on the words in pasuk (26:17) "ve'shamarta ve'asisa" (you guarded the mitzvah, and did it), that a bas kol came out and said, "You brought bikurim today, you should have new fruits to bring next year." The rich man gets his fancy basket back, so that the next year he can beautify the mitzvah once again. When the Kohen takes the poor man's basket the message he receives is, 'Next year you should be zocheh to bring bikurim in a more fitting basket.'

This bas kol is speaking to the poor man: you performed the mitzvah this year with tremendous mesiras nefesh. That mesiras nefesh should be zechus for you to return next year with a different basket.

There is another answer presented to this question. When the poor man brings his bikurim in a simple basket, he may feel that his

mitzvah is lacking or not up to par. The Kohen, in order to show him how chashuv his mesiras nefesh is, keeps his basket. This shows the poor man that Hashem wants to keep every ounce of his mesiras nefesh in the Beis Hamikdash.



Amen

The Midrash says, "There is nothing greater for Hakadosh Baruch Hu than the amens that Yisrael answer." The Gemara says, "One who answers amen is [doing a] greater [deed] than the one who says the brachah." The Midrash says, "Whoever answers amen in this world will merit answering amen in Olam HaBa."

Before making a brachah, **Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg zy'a** would always make sure that someone should be near him to answer amen. Rebbe Shmelke explained that when one makes a brachah, it creates a malach, but the malach isn't complete, unless someone answers amen to the brachah.

Once, when Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsburg was travelling, he needed to make an asher yatzar, but he didn't have anyone around to answer amen. Suddenly, he saw two people. Their appearance was awesome. He made the brachah, they answered amen sweetly and disappeared. Rebbe Shmelke guessed that these two 'men' were actually the malachim Refael and Gavriel. They came down from heaven, to help him make the brachah properly.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin zy'a was also meticulous in making a brachah only when someone else was present to answer amen. Once, he awoke early in the morning and wanted a cup of water, but there was no one to answer amen to his brachah.

Just then, one of the top bachurim of his yeshiva came to the beis medresh to ask Reb Chaim Volozhiner to explain a difficult Tosfos. Reb Chaim explained the Tosfos and then he said the brachah on the

water, and the bachur answered amen. Reb Chaim thanked him, and the bachur left.

The next day, Reb Chaim Volozhiner said to the bachur, "Thank you once again for answering amen. I was so thirsty last night; I wasn't able to continue learning without your help."

The bachur didn't understand what he was referring to. He had slept the entire night. Reb Chaim Volozhiner understood that Eliyahu HaNavi appeared to him, looking like that bachur, to help him with his kabbalah, to only say a brachah when someone is around to answer amen.

Footwear



Moshe reminds the Jews about some of the miracles they experienced while travelling in the desert. One of those miracles was the fact that, even though they had travelled for forty years, their shoes did not get worn out. However, in Parshas Eikev when this miracle is mentioned, Moshe says that their feet did not get swollen throughout all their travels. Why does it mention their shoes now while before it just spoke about their feet without shoes?

The answer is that there were two separate nissim: the people who left Egypt were wearing shoes and the nes for them was that their shoes stayed intact. However, the people who were born during the travels in the desert didn't have shoes, so the nes for them was that their feet did not swell.

Chessed

Reb Chaim Volozhiner zy'a said one must know that he didn't come down to the world for himself. He came down to the world in order to help others.

Blessings for Bracha

יְצַ֤ו ה' אִתְּךָ֙ אֶת־הַבְּרָכָ֔ה בַּאֲסָמֶ֖יךָ וּבְכֹ֣ל מִשְׁלַ֑ח יָדֶ֔ךָ

The L-rd will order the blessing to be with you in your granaries, and in every one of your endeavours.

The psukim in this week's parsha clearly tell us that, if we keep the mitzvos, Hashem will send us bracha. "Hashem will command the blessing for you in your storehouses and your every undertaking" (28:8). The word "blessing", or bracha, in that pasuk has a prefix of the letter "ה".

The Ben Ish Chai asks why the word needs the letter hei. He says that the letter ה equals five. That number represents the five brachos associated with bread. One blessing for the bread and four blessing in birchas hamazon. This prefix is placed in this pasuk to allude to the fact that the merit of these five brachos will be a key to bringing us bracha.

Prepare

There are twice the amount of *pesukim* about preparing for *mattan Torah* (26) than *pesukim* which discuss *mattan Torah* itself (13).

This suggests that preparation is the highest level. As chassidim say, "the preparation for a mitzvah is greater than the mitzvah itself." **~ R' Elimelech Biderman**

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



The parashah begins with the mitzvah of bikurim, to bring the first ripened fruit — of the seven species — to the cohanim in the Beis HaMikdash. The Midrash teaches "Hashem created the world for the mitzvah bikurim" (Yalkut Shimoni)

Chazal tell us about the joyous manner in which the bikurim was brought. The Mishnah states, "An ox [which would later be sacrificed] walked in the lead. Its horns were covered with gold and a wreath of olive-leaves on its head. A flute played … Important officials from Yerushalayim came out to greet them… People working in Yerushalayim would stand up to greet them…" (Bikurim chapter 2).

The Alshich asks, "What's the purpose of all this joy and excitement for some fruit, which costs less than a half-dinar? Our amazement increases when we consider the Midrash that states, 'Hashem created the world for the mitzvah of bikurim.' What is unique about this mitzvah, that the entire world was created for it?"

The answer is, bikurim reminds us that everything we have comes from Hashem. The fruit, the land, the wealth, the success, it's all a gift from Hashem.

The Alshich writes, "When a person is in the land that flows with milk and honey, he lives comfortably and fearlessly…his home is filled with wealth…he may begin to think that I earned this all on my own. Therefore, Hashem commanded us the mitzvah of bikurim…"

We now understand why bikurim is the purpose of creation, and why it was brought with so much joy. Bikurim reminds us that everything

we have is a gift from Hashem and this recognition is from the primary purposes of creation.

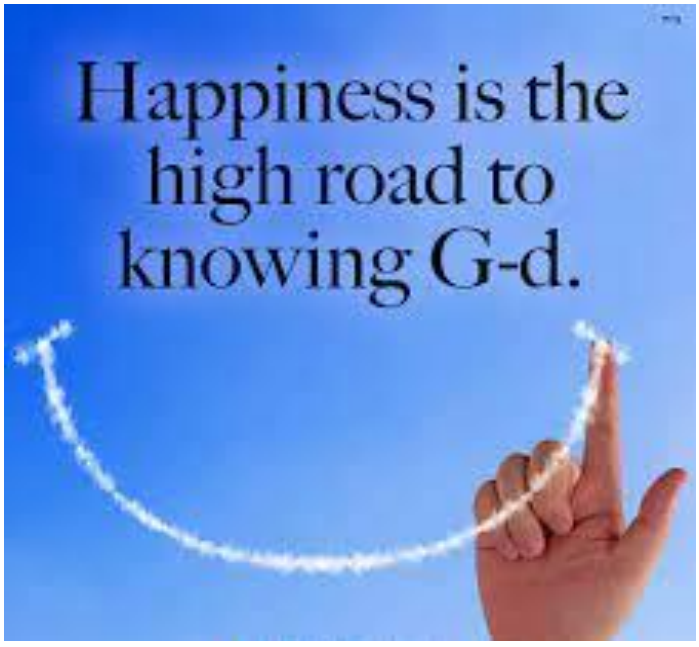
דברים כז, כו: וְאָמַר כָּל הָעָם אָמֵן

The Baal HaTurim remarks that the gematria of the word **אמן** is 91 which is equivalent to that of the combined Names of 'Havayah' and Adnus' (the written and spoken special name of HaShem).

Hence Chazal have said that someone who answers 'Amen' to a Berachah is greater than the person who recited the Berachah, since his declaration incorporates two Names of Hashem as against the one Name recited by the person who recites the Berachah.

Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin, Insights on Ki Sovoy

"…Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and goodness of the heart." (Devarim 28:47)



The verse describes how our failing to serve Hashem with joy will bring terrible anguish on the Jewish people. Why is this so important? The answer is that sometimes a person is in a stressful or difficult situation. That situation that he is in is the will of the Creator. The person sometimes fails to realize that this is the will of Hashem and that it is, by definition, a good situation. Everything from Hashem is good; it might be difficult but it is not bad. He should have joy just for the knowledge that we live through this situation and thereby are fulfilling the will of the Almighty.

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick tells a true story that illustrates this concept, that it is truly possible to serve Hashem in every circumstance that we find ourselves in.

Under one of the cruel regimes that imprisoned Jews for practicing their religion, **Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk** and his brother **Rebbe Reb Meshulam Zushya of Anipoli** were taken from their Bet Midrash and thrown into a prison cell. They shared a small, dark room with only each other and a bucket of waste still full from the previous "tenants" for company. At the sight of his prison cell, one of the Rebbes began to cry, "I'm not crying because we are in jail. I know that Divine Providence led me here, and everything Hashem does is for the best. I am crying because I have yet to pray Minhah, and now that there is a smelly bucket of waste in the cell, I am forbidden to pray. How can I serve Hashem if I can't even pray?" The other Rebbe smiled and responded, "Just as you serve Hashem by doing His will and praying Minhah every day, now you are doing His will by not praying Minhah, but you are serving Hashem in just the same way!"

After hearing that, the Rebbe who had not yet prayed rose with tears of joy. He grasped his brother's hands and together they sang and danced around the bucket of waste, ecstatic at the thought of serving Hashem according to His will. Hearing all the commotion, the prison guards approached the cell and witnessed the bizarre scene of two prominent Rabbis dancing and rejoicing around a bucket of waste.

Not wanting the Rebbes to have any kind of pleasure, they stormed the prison cell and removed the bucket, delighted at having deprived the Rebbes of their source of joy. As soon as the guards left, the Rebbe who had not yet prayed turned toward Jerusalem and prayed Minhah, once again delighted to serve Hashem in the best possible way!

Verber and Wechsler were certainly of the most famous escapees from the Nazi concentration camps.



They even managed to take out of Auschwitz papers that documented the horrific killing apparatus that the Nazis had organized. Auschwitz had an electrified fence that surrounded the inner camp with guard-towers every ten meters. These towers were only manned during the night. During the day, most inmates would work in the area outside the inner camp. This outer area was surrounded by a non-electrified fence and its guard towers were only manned during the day.

At the end of the day's work, the inmates would be marched into the inner camp and roll call would be taken. If all were accounted for, the gate of the inner fence would be locked and the guards manning the outer towers would move in to man the towers along the inner fence. If anyone would be missing, a siren would sound and the search would begin. For the next three days, the outer fence would be manned continuously and hundreds of men–all SS men and their blood-hounds, the Ukrainian workers and the German common

criminals who were also incarcerated in Auschwitz–would comb through every possible hiding place in both the inner and outer areas of the camp. If the escapees were not found after three days, a siren would signal the end of the search and the guards would resume their usual schedule, only manning the outer fence during the day.

At that time, Auschwitz was in the process of adding on additional bunkers. Neat and orderly piles of lumber were lined up in the outer area. The underground arranged that their people would be in charge of unloading and arranging the lumber that was delivered and they piled it up in a way that there was a small crawl space under the top three layers. Verber and Wechsler crawled into that area, had the top layers placed above them and covered themselves with Russian tobacco and kerosene in order to mask their scent from the dogs.

That night at roll call the siren sounded and the search began. The pile of lumber where Verber and Wechsler were hiding was passed tens of times but since the dogs ignored it, so did the searchers. Two and a half days went by and the hungry, frightened, exhausted escapees began to think that they would actually get away.

On the last day with just a few hours left, they heard two Germans approach the lumber pile. "Maybe they are in there?" they heard one say. "Impossible," the other retorted, "the dogs would have sniffed them out." They decided to check anyway. One layer was lifted off and then a second. They were about to begin lifting off the third layer when they heard shouts coming for the camp. Thinking that the escapees had been found, they ran to join the 'festivities,' never to continue their search of the woodpile.

A few hours later, the siren signaled the end of the search. When night fell, Verber and Wechsler began the arduous task of getting out of their hiding place. The three days of hunger, stiffness and terror had taken their toll. The lumber had become so heavy. It took hours to push a few pieces over enough to allow them to crawl out.

They then made their way under the unmanned, non-electrified fence to freedom.

Imagine the terror they felt as the first two layers were removed. Imagine the despair of those moments when the freedom that was so close seemed to be suddenly moving out of reach. Imagine how they must have been cursing the moment.

However, that which caused that terror, that torment and that despair was actually their salvation. They never would have had the strength to remove three layers of wood. Their hiding place would have become their burial place were it not for that close call.

Perhaps, that is how the events we're experiencing need to be viewed. Each act of terror, each close call is peeling away layer after layer, bringing the redemption that much closer.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe's Bottle of Vodka

Thousands of Jews were crowded into the huge shul at 770 Eastern Parkway, the shul of the Chabad Chassidim in Brooklyn, New York to hear the Lubavitcher Rebbe speak. Not only religious Chassidim but all sorts of Jews were there. Mr. Dovid Asulin came to see for himself and, although he didn't exactly believe all the stories, he was glad he came. In fact since he moved to France twenty years ago he had almost forgotten about the Tzadikim and now he felt at home. This was his first visit to America, and his friends told him that if he wanted an unforgettable experience, he had to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

After about two hours of listening, people began to stand up and form lines to the Rebbe and when they reached him, he would give each one a bottle of vodka. Mr. Asulin didn't understand that the bottles were only for those people that were making simchas. He thought that everyone was entitled to a bottle. So he got in line as well! When it came his turn and he was face to face with the

Rebbe, the Rebbe smiled, gave him a large bottle and said in French "This is for the wedding."



He was amazed; how did the Rebbe knew he spoke French! That was astounding, it just verified all the other stories he had heard. The Rebbe certainly had uncanny powers of perception! But one thing for sure...it also proved he wasn't infallible. Dovid had been happily married for years! What he said about the wedding was clearly wrong.

A week later he returned to France, unpacked, and when he showed his wife the bottle they had a good laugh over what the Rebbe said.

"The Rabbi is certainly a bit out of it..." David laughed to himself, "But he is a nice man, very dedicated. So, what if the Rebbe made a little mistake" and Dovid promptly forgot the entire incident.

Months later he happened to open the cabinet where he had put the bottle and it reminded him of his experience in Brooklyn. "You know" he said to his wife, "It's a shame that this should just remain unused. Let's throw a party, invite all our friends and family and give them all to drink a Le'chaim. It will be fun for everyone and a blessing as well. And I'm sure they will all come."

They began making plans. They decided to make it in the small wedding hall of the local shul. The day of the party arrived, and the guests began arriving in good spirits. A small band played happy music and people were exchanging greetings and handshakes. But as they were sitting down to begin the meal the Rabbi of the synagogue

entered the room with a smile, looked around for Dovid and when he found him took him aside and whispered something in his ear.

Dovid turned to the crowd and said: "The Rabbi needs nine men to join him to make a minyan. It will only take a few minutes, who wants to come? I'm going to go. "In no time he had the required number following the Rabbi to the next room for what they thought would be prayers, but they were in for a surprise. In the room stood a bride and groom alone; it was a wedding! In fifteen minutes, the entire ceremony was over.

Dovid and the other men shook the groom's hand, wished the newlyweds 'Mazal Tov' and gingerly asked where the wedding meal would be. When the groom answered that no meal had been arranged Dovid joyously announced that they were invited to his. Dovid's informal party suddenly became a real wedding party. The band played merrily, and the men began to dance on one side of the room with the groom, while the women on the other side danced with the bride.

When the dancing finished, they all sat down to eat. Then in the middle of the meal Dovid stood, held up the Rebbe's bottle, cleared his throat for silence and told the story of the Rebbe saying it was "For the Wedding!" Now he understood that the Rebbe wasn't mistaken at all.

"What!" exclaimed the bride. "That bottle is from the Lubavitcher Rebbe for my wedding?" and she burst into tears; she was weeping from sheer joy. When she calmed down, she explained.

This was her second marriage. Her first ended in a bitter divorce that, coupled with the fact that she decided to be an observant Jew, resulted in a major rift in her family and none of her relatives showed up. No one came from her husband's side either, but his reason was simpler. He converted to Judaism and simply had no family.

She felt so uncertain and alone that she felt she was bothered to no end. Then someone suggested she write a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

And a few weeks previous she did it and in the letter she asked for some sign that the marriage would succeed.

"And here you are with the Rebbe's blessing!!"



The Wise Soldier with A Wooden Sword By Asharon Baltazar

Every so often the czar would dress up as an ordinary Russian citizen. In this disguise he socialized with the public and received an unbiased and candid report about what transpired in his kingdom.

On one of these undercover ventures, the czar decided to visit a local inn. The inn was crowded with soldiers sitting around tables and drinking. Sitting among his friends was a Jewish soldier who knew nothing about his heritage. He was a cantonist, kidnapped from his family as a young boy, and forced into 25 years of service in the czar's army.

Noticing the man who had walked into the inn, the Jewish soldier approached him and offered to share a drink.

Unable to refuse such an invitation, the czar agreed. They both sat down and the Jewish soldier procured two cups and a bottle of Russia's finest vodka. The czar thanked him and guzzled the vodka down.

Without warning, the Jewish soldier reached over and slapped the czar's cheek, leaving the confused czar with an expression of shock on his face.

"Why?" the czar blurted out, unable to utter anything else.

The Jewish soldier glowered at him. "Don't you know the drinker's rule? You were supposed to fill my glass before putting yours down."

Aware of his ignorance of local customs, the czar apologized and filled the soldier's cup to the brim. The pair continued drinking together, until they finally finished the bottle.

Still thirsty, the Jewish soldier fruitlessly rummaged through his pockets for some kopeks before turning to the czar. "I'll be right back," he breathed tipsily.

Under the czar's attentive gaze, the Jewish soldier lumbered over to the innkeeper and spoke to him for a few minutes, occasionally gesturing to his side while the innkeeper nodded his head.

Triumphantly, and to the czar's horror, the soldier tugged his curved sword out from its sheath and presented it to the innkeeper, who produced a bottle of vodka from underneath the bar and swapped it for the sword. Seething at the sheer audacity of this soldier, who was willing to forsake his sword even temporarily for a bottle of vodka, the czar quickly made a note of the soldier's battalion before he could return to the table.

When the czar returned home, he ordered that he himself would conduct an inspection there. He planned to catch the soldier red-handed without his weapon.

Having received notification of the czar's visit, the military camp underwent rigorous preparations so that it would please the critical eye of the czar.

In the middle of all the frenzied excitement, the Jewish soldier sat on his cot, slowly fashioning a sword out of a block of wood. To appear for an inspection without one's sword was to appear for one's death sentence. Masterfully, he managed to produce an exact replica, from the hilt down to the curved blade. Pleased with his

handiwork, the soldier sheathed the sword and began preparing for the czar's visit.

On schedule, a loud call heralded the arrival of the czar, and all the soldiers assembled in symmetrical rows'. The czar sprang from his horse, scanning the faces for the one he remembered from the day before. The soldiers stiffened and held their breaths as the czar strode by aloofly, his hands clasped behind his back.

Finally, he spotted the soldier standing in the ranks, and was surprised to see the hilt of a sword jutting out from the sheath at the soldier's side. The soldier could have fooled him under different circumstances, but now he knew the truth: the real sword was at an inn on the side of some road, exchanged for a bottle of vodka.

The czar suppressed a smile. An idea had already formed in his mind. Turning to the Jewish soldier's neighbor, the czar breathed in and eyed the soldier with a feigned disgust, a convincing frown playing on his lips. "Since when did soldiers dare to appear before me dressed like this?" the czar challenged loudly, looking around.

The soldier bowed his head in terrified shame, shrinking in his uniform.

The czar knew there was nothing wrong with the soldier's uniform, but he needed justification for what he was going to do next.

"Forgive me, Your Majesty," the soldier pleaded, his voice nearly carried away in the breeze.

But the czar would hear none of it. "Have you no shame in appearing like this before me?

You!" the czar bellowed and pointed to the Jewish soldier, "I want you to take out your sword and behead him immediately!"

With the czar's order still ringing in his ears, the Jewish soldier hesitated, mindful of the fact that he was not capable of carrying out the czar's wish because his sword was made out of wood.

Quickly gathering his courage, the Jewish soldier spoke up. "Your Majesty! Here I am, eager and willing to fulfil your command. I have no right to dispute your words, but forgive me, Your Majesty, my belief is that this man is innocent. But who am I to challenge you and your orders? I stand by, ready to carry them out. G-d Almighty, however, is the One who judges all of mankind, and if He does not agree with your sentence, let Him transform a sword of steel into one of wood!"

And with those words the Jewish soldier pulled his sword out of its sheath and held it up high in the air in front of hundreds of stunned pairs of eyes. Indeed his sword had "changed" into wood.

The czar was impressed by the Jewish soldier's courage and ingenuity. Leaning in closely to the Jewish soldier so that no one could overhear, the czar whispered softly, "You may not know this, but I know the truth, and in light of your courage, I promote you to a higher rank."

Over time, bolstered to the upper echelons of Russian society by a series of steady promotions in the military, the Jewish soldier became a very close acquaintance of the czar and his family. He never mentioned his religion, and the czar never thought to inquire. But because of the Jewish soldier's high-ranking position, the czar was finally forced to ask. "I'm Jewish," declared the soldier truthfully.

The czar could not believe his ears. "All this time," asserted the czar angrily, "I've helped you rise to prominence and treated you like one of my own. Yet you kept this dark secret behind my back. Renounce your faith, as it will not benefit you in your pursuit of glory. If not, the consequence of misleading me is death. If you do accept our faith, the queen and I will support you like parents. There is practically no greater honour than us ushering you towards your noble assimilation." And slowly the czar tempted the Jewish

soldier's heart with illusions of grandeur, waving off any hesitancies, and eventually getting the soldier to agree to his proposal.

The ceremony was set to take place in a cathedral in the city of Kiev under the guidance of the archbishop of Ukraine. True to the czar's word, a large and ostentatious procession of soldiers accompanied the royal carriage, which slowly rolled its way through the city.

Sitting between the czar and his queen, the soldier was suddenly overtaken by a powerful arousal of his Jewish soul, and he was cast into deep spiritual turmoil. A relentless storm of thoughts gave him no rest and scoured him raw from inside. *What have I done?* The Jewish soldier stole a glance at the czar. *Am I willing to give up my faith for* this? *Never!*

The Jewish soldier's mind was filled with this resolute thought just as they were passing over a bridge. He asked for the carriage to be stopped, explaining that he needed to attend the call of nature.

Standing by the raging river, the Jewish soldier looked heavenward and cried out, "*Shema Yisrael . . . Echad!*" ("Hear O Israel: G-d is our L-rd, G-d is One"). Then he jumped and disappeared beneath the dark waters.

The czar was still sitting in the carriage when the news of the Jewish soldier's drowning reached him. After mulling it over in silence for moment, the czar remarked, "What a fool." And as the soldier's body descended toward the murky depths, the brave soldier's soul ascended ever higher.

"There are some," say the sages of the Talmud, "who acquire their portion of the world to come in but one moment." And such was surely the case of this soldier, torn from his heritage as a young boy, yet willing to give his life rather than renounce his identity.

The Holy Lights of The Ohr Hachaim The Rewards for the Souls and the Insane Sweetness of Torah

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ אַתָּה וְהַלֵּוִי וְהַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבֶּךָ

"You shall bow before Hashem, your G-d, and rejoice with all of the good that Hashem your G-d has granted you and your household, and the Levi and the ger who is among you"*(26:10–11).*

Says the **Ohr HaChaim**, a soul meets her Maker and thus the pasuk continues that she will rejoice with "all of the good". "All of the good" – bechol hatov, refers to Hashem, as in the pasuk in Tehillim 145:"Hashem is good", because Hashem encompasses and contains all goodness and is the source of all goodness. This priceless gift is given to you to bow before the source of all good to meet Hashem your Maker.

The Ohr HaChaim explains further that the pasuk says "you" are the recipient of this gift, as opposed to angels and seraphs, for only man can be the recipient of this gift of "all good".

The Ohr HaChaim then gives another explanation for the term in our pasuk bechol hatov – to rejoice with "all the good". This, says the Ohr HaChaim, refers to the Torah, as Chazal say in Berochos 5a, "There is no good except Torah." The Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh elaborates: אל התורה כאומרם ז"ל **בכל הטוב** (ברכות ה'.)

ואין טוב אלא תורה, שאם היו בני אדם מרגישין במתיקות ועריבות טוב התורה היו משתגעים ומתלהטים אחריה ולא יחשב בעיניהם מלא עולם כסף וזהב למאומה כי התורה כוללת כל הטובות שבעולם.

"If people would truly feel and taste the sweetness of the Torah's great goodness, they would go crazy; they would go out of their minds and chase after Torah, aflame with fiery passion and desire for Torah. They would ignore all the gold and silver in the entire world, considering it as worthless, because the Torah contains all the goodness in the entire world!"

The Chofetz Chaim's Warning About the One Who Sees



The Chofetz Chaim, Ztl, used to travel across Poland to distribute his Torah works. He recounted that once he was going in a wagon, when the driver saw an orchard with delicious fruit trees. The driver turned to his passenger and schemed: "Listen, my friend. I am making a short detour. I am going into the field to help myself to some of that fruit. If anybody is watching me, let me know immediately. I don't want to get into trouble here!"

The man parked the wagon on the side of the road and stealthily moved toward the orchard with a small sack in his hand. He was about to fill it with the fine, pilfered fruit when the Chofetz Chaim shouted from the wagon, "Someone is watching!" The man quickly ran back to the carriage and meandered around as if he were just taking a rest. A few moments later, he snuck back into the orchard, and slowly made his way toward the fruit-laden trees.

Once again, as he was about to snatch the fruit off the tree, he heard the Rabbi shout. "They're watching! They're watching!" This time, the man dropped his sack and looked all around. He saw no one. Hands on his hips, he approached the wagon.

"I don't see anyone! Who's watching?" he demanded. At that, The Chofetz Chaim shrugged, smiled, and rolled his eyes heavenward as he pointed his finger upwards and exclaimed: ***"He is!"***

At one Bar Mitzvah, the rabbi stacked a bunch of apples on one end of a table with a sign,

"Take only one apple please; G-d's watching."

On the other end of the table was a pile of cookies where a friend of the bar-mitzvah boy had placed a sign saying,

"Take all the cookies you want; G-d's watching the apples!"

People who think they can conceal what they do are like kids. Hashem gives people the illusion that no one is watching to maintain the idea of free will. However, don't forget: He's watching!

Someone's approached his Rosh Yeshiva, **Reb Yehuda Zev Segal zt'l** of Manchester, and said, "As the Rosh Yeshiva knows, my father was recently niftar. My mother requests that I leave the yeshiva to run my father's food factory, so I can support the family." Reb Yehudah Zev replied, "You should certainly help your mother, the almanah. I have only one request from you: every day, by Maariv, when you say **על ניסיך שבכל יום עמנו**, ***'the miracles that You perform for us each day,'*** I want you to stop at these words and ask yourself, 'what miracle did Hakadosh Baruch Hu do with me today…?"

This man says that he has followed his Rosh Yeshiva's counsel for forty years now, and he can testify that there has never been a day where he hasn't experienced a miracle. Focusing on the miracles and on Hashem's kindness will enable us to be joyous, despite the hardships.

The following will help us understand: Stay focused on all the good we have in life. There are hardships in life, as well, but if we focus on the good — and there always is a lot of goodness — we will see that we have many reasons to be happy with our portion.

Tosfos in Meseches Shabbos 119b says that one must have the words **אֵ-ל מֶלֶךְ נֶאֱמָן** ***in mind at the time he says*** **אמן** ***–which is the Roshei Taivos of the word*** **אמן.**

Ignoring the Hardships

Chazal say, **אין מפסיקין בתוכחה *"One doesn't stop in the middle of the tochachah."***



All ninety-eight curses stated in this week's parashah (and similarly, the forty-nine curses stated in Bechukosei) should be read at once, without stopping to make another aliyah in the middle.

The Sfas Emes explains that suggested in these words is a counsel to cancel the tochachah. When one is going through hard times, he is advised not to think about his problems too much. He should get on with his life and keep the sorrows off his mind. This is the implication of the words **אין מפסיקין בתוכחה** don't stop to think about the curses and hardships you are going through.

At times, it's beneficial to think about the problems, in order to find solutions. However, it isn't wise to **always** think about the problems. It will only draw him down. Furthermore, thinking too much about the problems gives them life and substance. By contrast, if one doesn't think about problems, they cease to exist.

The Sfas Emes (Re'eh 5635) writes, "If a person doesn't change [he doesn't become stressed and worried] when he receives affliction, they will not endure, and the curses will leave him.

Therefore, Chazal say, one shouldn't stop his deveikus and his bitachon in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, no matter what happens to him."

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



On the first morning of Succos, a Jewish soldier, dressed in a Russian army uniform, showed up at the tish of the **Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim zt'l**. The moment the Rebbe saw him, he said that he sees a great light on this man. After the tish, the chassidim gathered around the soldier. They wanted to know how he earned this spiritual aura. The soldier didn't understand why they were making a big deal out of him, and he told them what happened to him the previous night.

"The army camp is near Slonim, and last night, I was on guard duty. My heart, however, yearned for the mitzvah of succah, or at least to eat a kezayis in a succah. But the commander was watching us soldiers, and it was impossible to leave the camp. I saw from the distance, on the other side of the gate, the succah of a Yid who lives on the outskirts of Slonim. I was waiting for the moment to jump over the fence to do the mitzvah, but the commander was always nearby.

Close to midnight, I noticed that the commander wasn't around. I quickly jumped the gate and ran to the succah. The family was already sleeping. I knocked, and I begged them to open the door for a Yid, who desires immensely to eat in a succah.

The baal habayis opened the door and brought me wine for Kiddush. I washed my hands, ate a kezayis, and immediately said birchas hamazon. The family wanted to bring me other courses, but I had to return to my post. I ran to the camp, my heart beating in fear.

When I returned, I realized that the commander didn't notice that I had left. I was so happy that I was able to perform this mitzvah, I danced the entire night until the morning…"

The Birkas Avraham zt'l told this story, and concluded, "The great light on the soldier wasn't because he had mesirus nefesh to eat in the succah on that night. It was mostly because of his simchah shel mitzvah. His yearning, love, joy, and dancing that he was able to do this mitzvah brought him to the level that he shone from holiness."

The Chofetz Chaim (Rav Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan,Yartzeit 24th of Elul)

A Lesson from The Technological Revolution

The communication revolution started back in the days of the Chofetz Chaim when telegrams were the common way of quickly communicating important messages. However, it was not cheap, and you paid per word.

I remember the days when they were still used. Each word was written only after a lengthy din v'cheshbon to determine if it was really necessary or if it could be shortened. The few times that my parents received a telegram, the messages came out so cryptic that you needed to be a genius to decipher them.

This, says the Chofetz Chaim, is a wonderful lesson in Shmiras HaLoshon. One day we will also give a din v'cheshbon on each word...and the price will be far more than the most expensive telegram.

"In Hashem's eyes, you are His only child and the only person in the entire world. Hashem can give you everything." ~ R' Shimshon Dovid Pincus Zt"l.

Likute Mimini Michoel

The Gemara in Maseches Megiloh [31b] says that we read the tochecho (rebuke) contained in our parshah before Rosh Hashono, in order that tichleh shono v'kililoseho, the old year and its curses should end.

How does the reading of the tochecho help our situation? The answer is that Hashem promised that, when there is sadly no Beis HaMikdosh, we can still 'offer' korbonos by reciting and learning the parshiyos related to them.

In a similar vein, when we read the tochecho, we hope that, if (G-d forbid) we were deserving of any of its punishments, it should be considered as if it befell us r"l through the conduit of its recitation. Then, going forward, only brocho should come our way. (**Tiferes Shlomo of Radomsk)**

Chovos HaLevavos ~ Sha'ar HaBitachon

There are 7 qualities that Hashem has that can strengthen our trust in Him:

1. Hashem loves me.

2. Hashem is with me, wherever I may be. And He is always ready to help me.

3. Hashem is stronger and cleverer than anyone in the world. And He can find solutions to any problem there is – even if it may seem impossible.

4. Hashem knows what is best for me, better even than I myself can know.

5. Just as He has helped me already numerous times on the path I travel, He shall help me again.

6. No one can do anything at all to help me or harm me, besides Hashem who controls everything over the entire world.

7. The Master of the World desires and searches for ways to act with chesed – loving kindness more than the nicest, kindest person you could ever imagine.

Rav Eliyohu (Elya) Lopian Feeds the Cat (Yartzeit 20th of Elul)



One day in Yeshiva Kfar Chassidim, the almona of the late Rosh Yeshiva, **Rav Noach Shimanovich**, went down to the storage room together with one of the bochurim to bring up some supplies for the kitchen. While they were in the storage room, they heard suspicious noises. When Rebbetzin Shimanovich asked the bochur what the source of the scurrying noises were, he told her that the bochurim had spotted mice on several occasions.

Rebbetzin Shimanovich was aghast at this news and asked the bochurim to find a solution to the problem. The bochurim located a cat that would hopefully take care of the burgeoning mice population in the Yeshiva. A few weeks late, the Gaon Rav Eliyohu Lopian was walking around the Yeshiva building on his daily walk accompanied by a bochur. They were discussing words of Torah when they suddenly ran into the Yeshiva cat. Rav Eliyohu was surprised – this was the

first time he had seen a cat on the Yeshiva grounds. "Whose cat is this?" inquired Rav Lopian. The bochur explained that the cat had been brought to the Yeshiva to curtail the mice problem. Rav Lopian inquired further, "And who feeds her?" The bochur answered, "What do you mean? She has plenty of food – she eats the mice. We don't need to bring her food." Rav Lopian answered, "I don't understand. If she does her job well, and scares off the mice, she won't have anything left to eat! We surely have to provide her with food."

Rav Lopian then entered his apartment and brought out a bowl of milk. He said to the bochur, "When you want one of Hashem's creations to serve you and work for you, you need to provide it with food. This is an explicit mitzva in the Torah: "And I will put grass in your fields for your cattle – and you will eat..."

If It Were the Chofetz Chaim's Shabbos



The Chofetz Chaim once travelled to another city, and the people of the city emerged to greet the Godol HaDor. Many wealthy men of the city were among those who came to greet the Chofetz Chaim and receive a berocha. One wealthy man approached the Chofetz Chaim and gave him a sizable donation for Yeshiva Radin. The Chofetz Chaim grabbed the man's hand and began to cry bitterly, saying, "This hand gives tzedoka with such respect, and alas it is mechallel the Shabbos!" The Chofetz Chaim continued to hold the man's hand and cry, and the wealthy man's heart melted, and he too began crying bitterly.

The wealthy man said, "Rebbe, I promise you that from today I will keep the Shabbos. But please allow me to be able to perform melocha this coming Shabbos at least, so I can wrap up my affairs."

The Chofetz Chaim answered with great emotion, "My dear son, if it were my Shabbos I would be mochel you and allow you whatever you request, but it's the Shabbos of HaKodosh Boruch Hu, the King of kings. I can't allow even one moment of chillul Shabbos! The wealthy man accepted the words of the Chofetz Chaim, and began keeping the Shabbos from that week, eventually becoming fully observant.

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport

A farmer is required to bring bikkurim – the first ripened fruits of the seven species for which the land of Israel is praised – to the Temple. The Medrash teaches (Bereishis Rabbah 1:4) that the world was created in the merit of three mitzvos, one which is bikkurim. Why is this mitzvah so great that it justified the creation of the entire universe?

The **Alshich HaKadosh** explains that the mitzvah of bringing bikkurim to the Beis HaMikdash teaches the concept of **הכרת הטוב** – feeling and expressing appreciation for all the goodness and bounty that Hashem bestows upon us. The need to recognize that everything that we have comes from Hashem and to transform this intellectual understanding into emotional feelings of appreciation is such a fundamental and essential concept that it justified the entire Creation.

"Every encounter with another person is a test of giving. If we choose generosity, even in a small moment, we reshape our character in ways that last forever." ~ Rav Dessler.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg - The Siddur Speaks



Rav Yehudah HaChasid taught in Sefer Chasidim (18), that the main idea of all Tefilah is to have a joyous heart before Hashem, as the Pasuk tells us in Divrei HaYamim (16:10), that those who seek Hashem should rejoice in their hearts. This is the reason Dovid Ha'melech accompanied all his Tefilah and Tehilim with his harp, so he could fill his heart with joy and love of Hashem.

Singing and Nigunim, melodies, are a method for one to grow higher in the levels of Ruchniyus. **The Sefer Chareidim** writes (Perek 34) that singing while Davening is an expression of great love for Hashem. The Gemara (Arachin 11a) says, "Which is the service of Hashem that is of joy and happiness? It is song."

Serving Hashem with song is a very powerful way to get closer to Hashem, as Hashem loves when his children serve Him with joy and happiness!

"The purpose of mitzvos is not to remove man from the world, but to elevate the world through the actions of man. Every mitzvah is a call to sanctify the ordinary— to transform eating, speaking, working, and resting into acts of divine service. Judaism does not ask man to flee from life, but to fill life with meaning until every breath becomes a testimony to the Creator."
~ Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Serve Him with Joy

The Torah teaches (28:47) that the terrible curses described throughout the parsha will come as a result of not serving Hashem with gladness.

If this is indeed such a terrible sin, why is there no commandment to do so? (Yad Av)

In his sefer **Yad Av**, **Rav Doniel Yehuda Bloch** argues that this question is mistaken in its premise, as the very complaint against our performing the mitzvos without happiness is that joy should be an automatic by-product of serving Hashem.

He compares this to a case of somebody who gives an incredibly valuable gift to his friend, who will naturally rejoice upon recognizing what he has been given. It would be inappropriate and superfluous to add a request that he enjoy the present. Similarly, if we truly appreciated the value of all that Hashem has given us, we would automatically serve Him with joy, and for not doing so we are punished severely.

Punishments

Rashi writes (29:12) that Moshe threatened the Jewish people with a total of 98 different curses if they fail to observe the commandments. Why did he specifically mention this number of punishments? (Tosefos Rid, Yad Av)

The **Tosefos Rid** notes that the numerical value of the word Gehinnom (גהנם) is 98. Therefore, Moshe threatened the people with 98 curses in the hopes that these 98 punishments would exempt them from having to experience the actual Gehinnom.

Alternatively, **Rav Doniel Yehuda Bloch** suggests that the 98 curses correspond to the 98 spiritual levels through which a person can climb or, G-d forbid, fall.

When the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt, they were on the 49th level of spiritual impurity, and during the ensuing seven weeks they extricated themselves and ascended to the 49th level of holiness prior to the giving of the Torah.

In order to remind us of our constant obligation to grow and climb the spiritual ladder and of the danger of falling to the greatest depths imaginable if we fail to do so, Moshe specifically mentioned 98 different curses, one for each level of spirituality.

נפלאות הבורא - Hashems Amazing World - Snowflakes

Anyone who takes a close look at snowflakes can see that they come in a variety of shapes. It is estimated that a single cubic meter of snow holds about 350 million snowflakes! These flakes are all hexagonal and have crystal-like structures. However, each one of them possesses a unique shape. The formation of snowflakes constitutes yet another aspect of Hashem's endless artistry.



These thin, small flakes look like multi-pointed stars or tiny needle heads. Since 1945, research has been carried out in a quest to discover which factors give the final shape to the crystals.

A single snowflake is a pile of crystals consisting of more than 200 ice crystals. Snowflakes are made up of water molecules that are shaped in a perfect order. Snowflakes, one of Hashem's true architectural wonders, are shaped when water vapor gets cold while passing through clouds. The basic factor that determines the shape of a snowflake is that these hexagonal water molecules are joined together just like links in a chain.

In addition, the pieces of crystals, which normally should look alike, take on very different shapes according to the temperature and level of moisture. Why is it that there is a hexagonal symmetry in all snowflakes and why is each of them different from the others? Why are their edges angled rather than straight?

Scientists are still trying to find answers to these questions. Yet this much is evident: Hashem is the One Who has no partners in creation, is the Possessor of an endless power and the Originator of everything.

Save A Poor Man From Embarrassment! - B. Rose



This weeks parsha starts with "ViSamta Bateneh" - "You shall place the Bikkurim in a basket"; the mitzvah of Bikkurim.

Chazal tell us that the wealthy people would bring their Bikkurim in golden baskets which the Kohanim would return to them. As opposed to the poor who would bring it in wicker baskets which the Kohanim kept. Why did the Kohanim return the baskets to the wealthy who did not need their baskets, and keep the poor man's basket?

The Meforshim explain, this was in order not to shame the poor. The wealthy gave expensive, beautiful fruit. Even without the golden basket it looked impressive. Therefore, the Kohanim returned the baskets to them. - On the other hand, the poor gave low quality fruit. If it would have been removed from the basket, the poor man would be embarrassed. Therefore, the Kohanim kept their fruit and the baskets.

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez

וְהָיָה֙ כִּֽי־תָבֹ֣וא אֶל־הָאָ֔רֶץ.. וִֽירִשְׁתָּ֖הּ וְיָשַׁבְתָּ֥ בָּֽהּ 26:1 - ***And it will be, when you come into the land .. and you possess it and settle in it.***

We are all eagerly awaiting the great day when Moshiach will arrive and bring us back to our land to Eretz Yisroel. The entire world will recognise that Hashem is the only one and true king, and Klal Yisroel will finally live in peace.

The Arizal teaches us (Sefer Halikutim) that when Moshiach comes the letter ו in Hashem's name **י-ה-ו-ה** will be magnified to a **י** : **י-ה-י-ה**. The Gematria will increase from 26 to 30.

The Remez lies in the famous Posuk וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה' אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד:(Zechariah 14:9).

Another hint can be found in Tehilim 68:5 שְׁמוֹ וְעִלְזוּ לְפָנָיו :בְּיָ-הּ The world will endure true happiness when Hashems name will become twice **י-ה-י-ה** :יָ-הּ

Says **The Ben Ish Chai** our Posuk is hinting to us that only once Hashem's name is glorified from **י-ה-ו-ה** [26] to **י-ה-י-ה** [30] will we all occupy the land of Eretz Yisroel and live in it.

וְהָיָה֙ כִּֽי־תָבֹ֣וא אֶל־הָאָ֔רֶץ.. When **י-ה-ו-ה** turns into **י-ה-י-ה** (**כִּי** =30) will we all occupy the land of Eretz Yisroel and live in it.

וִֽירִשְׁתָּ֖הּ וְיָשַׁבְתָּ֥ בָּֽהּ

"A person must know that every moment of his life is a precious deposit placed in his hands. If a person would truly understand the value of a single moment used for Torah or kindness, he would guard his time more carefully than a king guards his treasures. For time is the only possession that cannot be restored once lost, and the wise heart is one who counts his days so that he may fill them with eternal gain." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

A Short Vort- Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"And all of these curses will come upon you..because you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and goodness of the heart" *(28:45-47)*



Such is the great blessing and importance of serving Hashem with great joy, especially in difficult circumstances that ***Rav Shach*** wrote that he would have given all of his life's achievements in exchange of having the precious moments of richness and pleasure of those who stood outside a gas chamber waiting to be killed when they suddenly remembered that the day was *Simchas Torah*.

"We don't have a *Sefer Torah*" they said "But we do have the Creator of the World with us, and with Him we will dance!" And that is what they did moments before they were killed, they danced with joy at the precious gift of Torah that Hashem had given them.

"Teshuvah is not merely the correction of sin; it is the return to one's deepest self. Within every person lies a hidden point of purity that never becomes stained. When a person turns toward Hashem, he reconnects with that inner light, and from that connection flows strength, joy, and renewal. Teshuvah is the song of the soul rediscovering its own harmony, and through it, a person becomes capable of heights he never dreamed possible." ~ Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook.

All the Healing is in my Wife's Merit



At the turn of the 19th century, before the First World War, there were still great rebbes that could heal; there was the **Kerestirer Rebbe**, **Reb Yeshaya**. He did not place his hands on a person or speak - but if you ate food in his house, you went away healed.

When his wife Sarah died, the Rebbe wept terribly and would not be consoled. He told the Chasidim, "You probably thought that people who ate in my house were healed because of me. That's not true. It was because of my holy wife, Sarah. Now that she's gone I can tell you. Listen to this story of what happened.

'In our younger days we were desperately poor. If we ate one meal a week we would have food to eat on Shabbos, but we wouldn't be able to have any guests. So we fasted from Shabbos to Shabbos. Then we had enough food for ourselves and for some guests.

One week, my holy wife was cooking on Friday for Shabbos, when a drunkard knocked on the door and was invited in. He was reeking of alcohol, but he said to my wife, 'I'm starving, do you have anything to eat?'

We had not eaten that whole week, but who knows how long he had been without food, and when someone says they're starving, how can you not feed them? So my wife gave him from the food she had prepared for Shabbos.

After finishing what she gave him, however, he asked, 'Is there more?' Each time he ate whatever was put before him and asked for

more, until she said, 'There's not a crumb left.' She gave him everything she had prepared for our Shabbos meals. She gave him everything gently and respectfully, because she was doing a great mitzvah and good deed. She didn't judge him by how he looked or for his crude behaviour, for who knows what troubles he had suffered?

"Then this drunkard did something unusual. He asked, 'Can I speak to your husband?' My wife came to my room and told me about his request and, when I agreed, my wife sent him to me. When he came in, he no longer smelled, and he didn't appear drunk. In fact, his face was glowing, and I realized at once that this was Elijah the Prophet.

He said to me, 'I only came here to bless your wife. Her kindness has made a great impression in heaven. But we wanted to give her a final test to see if she was worthy of the great blessing that we have in store for her. She passed the test.' "What was the great blessing? It was the blessing of healing." And that," said the Rebbe, "was why the food my holy wife served healed whoever ate it." [Mai Ber Yeshayahu, pp. 43-44.]

When **Rebbe Yeshaya of Kerestirer** was on his deathbed and close to his final hours, he called over one of his intimates and whispered, "In a little while there will be a 'funeral' here and many people will be coming from far away. So please put a very big pot on the stove and boil a lot of potatoes, and then cook them with a lot of chicken fat, because I want all those Jews to have some tasty food after their long trip."

Rav Shimshon Pincus — She'arim B'Tefillah, Shaar HaBitachon

"Tefillah is not a last resort; it is the first address. When a person turns to Hashem before turning anywhere else, he discovers that Heaven was waiting for him to knock."

The ability to maintain equanimity and objectivity saves us from being reactive and even over reactive to situations. Nobody is then able to manipulate us! We gain freedom and retain our dignity thereby. We are not controlled by circumstances as long as we choose our response.



The Klausenberger Rebbe. While imprisoned in a Nazi camp during the Holocaust, but he retained an unswerving dedication to Torah and Mitzvos. He continued to wear Tefillin, which he had hidden with him. One day, a Nazi guard discovered him with his Tefillin. He fell upon the Rebbe, beating him furiously. Then, once the Rebbe had fallen, the guard placed his foot on the Rebbe's face, pressing the bottom of his boot into the Rebbe's cheek. "Now," mocked the guard, "do you still think you are the chosen people?" The Rebbe replied, "If you'll let me speak, I will explain why I believe we are the chosen people." In that moment of temporary reprieve the Rebbe asked, "If I was in the same position of dominance over you as you are over me, would I be doing to you what you are now doing to me?" The guard paused thoughtfully and shook his head "no".

The Rebbe concluded convincingly, "Then we are the chosen people!" Now I know the notion of a Chosen People is mis-understandably noxious to a select few but perhaps it can be better appreciated if the focus was in the other direction as we proudly carry the mantle of the choosing people!

Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky zt'l says that the definition of blessing and curse is very objective.



What one person sees as a wonderful blessing another person may view as a terrible curse. He explains that when he was a prisoner in Siberia, they had hardly any food and suffered terribly from pangs of hunger.

The winters were absolutely frigid and the only clothing he had was inadequate to protect him from the brutal cold. He, and the other prisoners, lived with the constant danger of becoming frostbitten.

As Rosh Hashana approached their dream of 'the year ending with its curses' meant that they would have a little bread so they wouldn't starve, and a full set of shoes that weren't ripped. And if G-d really wanted to shower them with blessing, He would allow them to somehow procure a coat with a warm lining and a scarf. That would be the greatest blessing.

Then, when G-d saved him from Siberia and he returned to more of a life of normalcy where he had enough food to survive, and clothing to at least keep him warm, the definition of blessing and curse changed. At that point 'the year ending with its curses' entailed that the following year he would have more money and better food. The next year such a person could desire a bigger house with a nicer coach, etc.

People will always feel that there are curses, no matter how much they are blessed with. Unless one trains himself to appreciate what he has, he will always be dissatisfied and see his 'lack' as a curse. It

is that negative outlook that we hope we will be able to eradicate from within ourselves as the new year concludes. In that sense it's up to us. One person may view a certain lifestyle as a curse, but if that person is able to feel happy with what he has, it is he who is rich!

There was once an acknowledged artist who invited his friends to his gallery to witness the uncovering of his new painting entitled "The Door to Happiness." When he presented the painting, the assemblage marvelled at the beauty and colour, and the outstanding craftsmanship. The painter announced that there was a flaw in the painting, and he wanted to see who was keen enough to notice it.



Try as they might no one could find any flaw in the masterpiece, until one observer remarked that there was no handle on the door. Everyone gasped when they realized the now glaring omission.

The artist smiled confidently, and explained, "This is the door to happiness. It is opened from the inside."

"You shall rejoice with all the good that G-d is giving to you"

זוהר – Parshas Terumah 178a – When one answers **אמן** on a Brocha he should have in mind the Names of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Together they equal, **א-ד-נ-י** and **י-ה-ו-ה** the Gematria of – **אמן** 91.

Chabad.org By Yehuda Shurpin

Why Do Some Tear Challah and Others Cut It?



In most houses that I have been to for a Shabbat meal, the host slices the challah with a knife. However, there are some who tear it by hand instead. Is that a thing? Why is that?

While most slice, there are indeed some who rip (such as Bukharian Jews). And some used to have the custom to always cut the bread with a knife except for on Friday day (before Shabbat), when they made a point to rip apart by hand and not cut.

If that got you confused, just stick with the custom of your family or community and you'll be OK.

Here are the reasons behind the various customs:

Slicing is Default

The most common custom is to slice the challah with a knife. This is also implied by the various sources that discuss the custom of lightly marking the bread with a knife before the *hamotzi* blessing.

Additionally, the sages instruct us to refrain from ripping off hunks of food with our hands, as this can appear to be gluttonous. (This does not necessarily apply on Shabbat, when taking delight in Shabbat with gusto is a positive thing.)

The Angel of Livelihood

There are also mystical reasons for specifically using a knife.

The Kabbalists explain that *chatach* (**חתך**), which means "cut," is the name of the angel in charge of livelihood.

This is reflected in the High Holiday prayer, which refers to G-d as **החותך חיים לכל חי**, "He who cuts (apportions) life to all living beings."

It is also reflected in the verse from Psalms that we recite multiple times daily in Ashrei: **פּוֹתֵחַ אֶת־יָדֶךָ וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ לְכָל־חַי רָצוֹן**, "You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing [with] its desire." Take the final letters of the opening three words of this verse and you get *chatach*, **חתך**.

Furthermore, the fourth word, **וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ**, which means "and satisfy," has the numerical value of 428, the same value as the word *chatach*.

Based on this, Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz (1726–1791) had the custom to specifically cut the bread, symbolic of our sustenance, with a knife.

(Incidentally, this is also the reason for the custom of purchasing a new knife for Rosh Hashanah.)

Not on Fridays and Pesach

As mentioned above, some had the custom that on Friday (before Shabbat) they would tear their bread instead of slicing it. This differentiated between the mundane bread of Friday and the mitzvah bread they would eat that night. It was also a reminder that one is not supposed to eat a "satiating" meal on Friday before Shabbat, since as mentioned, the word **וּמַשְׂבִּיעַ** ("satiate") has the same numerical value as **חתך** ("cut").

Interestingly, on Pesach when we eat matzah, the "poor man's bread," we use our hands to break the matzah instead of slicing it with a knife, which alludes to satisfaction and plenty.

Violent Knives

How about those who do have the custom to tear the challah? Why do they do so? Here is one explanation: Our tables reflect the Altar

of the Holy Temple, about which it is written: "Do not raise an iron [blade] upon them." This, the sages explain, is because iron shortens man's lifespan, while the Altar prolongs it. Our tables also lengthen our lives and cause our sins to be forgiven because when we invite guests, G-d's presence dwells among us.

Since the main part of the meal is the bread, upon which the blessing is recited, some are careful not to cut it with a life-shortening knife.

(This is also the reason for covering metal knives that are on the table during Birkat Hamazon after the meal. However, many have the custom to specifically not cover the knives on the table on Shabbat and holidays because on these holy days, the power of Esau and the forces of evil are weakened and need not be negated. This dovetails with the widespread custom to use the knife to cut the Shabbat bread without compunction.)

Jewish Education Program -How to Focus to be Happy



וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ

"And you shall rejoice with all the goodness that Hashem your G-d has given to you and your household" (Devarim 26:11)

A man once asked the **Maggid of Mezeritch** to explain the Talmudic saying, "A person is supposed to bless Hashem for the bad just as he blesses Him for the good". The Maggid told the man to ask **Reb Zusha of Hanipoli**. The man went and found Reb Zusha, who received him warmly and invited him into his home. When the guest came in, he saw that the family barely had

anything to eat and were beset with afflictions and illnesses. Nevertheless, Reb Zusha was happy and cheerful. The guest was astonished. He questioned Reb Zusha as to how it is possible for a person to bless Hashem for the "bad" as well as for the good. Reb Zusha expressed surprise that the Maggid sent this man to see him. Reb Zusha felt that the Maggid should have sent him to someone who has experienced suffering. (From Once Upon A Chassid by Yanki Tauber)

Reb Zusha's answer showed that it is possible for a person to see only good and be happy even in "bad" circumstances. Reb Zusha lived his whole life in dire poverty. Yet, Reb Zusha only experienced joy.

In olden times, a farmer had to work exceedingly hard. He woke up before dawn and worked on his field until dark. He would clear the field of rocks and debris, plough, plant, water, weed, & harvest. After a successful harvest in the Land of Israel, he brought the first of his fruits (*bikurim*) to the *Beis Hamikdash* in Jerusalem. It would be natural for the farmer to feel exuberant. His hard work had produced a successful crop. Now he could thank Hashem. Yet, the Torah specifically gives this farmer a directive, a mitzvah, to be happy for all the good that Hashem has given him.

Rabbi Modechai Gifter zt"l, the late Rosh Hayeshiva of Telz, asks why the Torah gave the farmer a commandment to be happy at a time that he naturally would be happy. Rabbi Gifter answers that by nature, man is always looking for more. If he has one hundred, he wants two hundred. If a person focuses on what he doesn't have rather than what he does have, he will feel unhappy.

There are those who are very wealthy and have nachas in their lives. Yet, they feel unhappy because they focus on what they don't have. Others who may be poor and have many difficulties in life are happy because they focus on the good that they **do** have. Therefore, the Torah instructs this person to focus on the good that he has and

be happy. (based on Rabbi Frand on the Parsha and Rabbi Pliskin in Growth through Torah)

At times, one may feel that if I can get more of something, **then** I will be happy. If that is his focus, then he will never be happy. When he finally gets what he wanted, he will once again focus on what he doesn't yet have. He will say that if I just get that, **THEN** I will be happy. One can only be happy if his focus is on appreciating what he **DOES** have. Can he see? Then he should appreciate that. Can he hear? Can he walk? Does he have food? Does he have a house, a job, or friends? Then he should appreciate that. Again, the trick is to focus on that which he does have.

Focus on the good that you do have! That is a key to being happy.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

In this week's parsha, we discuss the topic of separating maser. They had to recite a certain text.

וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בִּעַרְתִּי הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִן־הַבַּיִת וְגַם נְתַתִּיו לַלֵּוִי וְלַגֵּר לַיָּתוֹם וְלָאַלְמָנָה כְּכֹל־מִצְוָתְךָ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָנִי לֹא־עָבַרְתִּי מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ וְלֹא שָׁכֵחְתִּי

Then you shall say before Hashem, "I have removed the holy [portion] from the house, and I have also given it to the Levi, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, according to all Your commandment that You commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten [them]. 26:13

What does **וְלֹא שָׁכֵחְתִּי** -"I did not forget" mean, to what is it referring to?

Rashi explains - **שכחתי: מלברך על הפרשת מעשרות** to bless You [on remembering to perform of the mitzvah] of separating tithes.

The **Maharal** asks that how could it be that the Torah is referring to a bracha? A bracha is a de'rabbon. It cannot be that the Torah is saying that I did not forget to make a bracha.

The Maharal explains that a bracha is said to thank Hashem for something that you have got, to appreciate something which Hashem gave us. This is what the Torah over here is referring to. It is not referring to the bracha per se of saying the actual bracha, because that is a de'rabbon, rather it is referring to the inyan of why we make a bracha, to thank The Riboino Shel Olam for the zechus and privilege of performing the mitzva.

Many times, we do mitzvas because we feel that we have to do them. But we don't always appreciate them and understand their value. We don't realise what a privilege it is to perform a mitzvah.

A Jewish Russian Army Major walks into the **Slonimer Rebbes** tisch (as usual in those times, the Russian army sought to draught boys into his army by force). The rebbe stood up to honour the Major. All the chassidim followed suit and stood up. They wondered who this important person was. The rebbe calls over the Major and asks him, "tell me something, your face is shining, what have you done recently to earn this wonderful appearance?"

He replies with various reasons, but the rebbe dismisses them all. He then said that a couple of days ago, our army General told us that we are going to be camped at a certain place (where there were Jews) for the next few days. I was very excited, as it was the start of Succos. Maybe I could find someone Jewish with a Succah, and I could carry out the great mitzva of sitting and eating in a succah.

He put in a request to take some leave to carry out this holy mission. However, the General would not allow it under any circumstances. Not only that, but the General appointed guards to ensure that he would not sneak off.

At one point in late into the night, the sentry dozed off and he took the opportunity to slip out of the camp and ran to the nearest succah that he could find. The occupants were very scared to see a soldier standing there unannounced in their succah. He said, "it's ok I am

Jewish, and I am just looking to quickly carry out the mitzva of sitting and eating in a succah. Please give me some bread to eat."

He does the mitzvah, and he quickly makes his way back to the camp, where the sentries are still fast asleep.



He tells the rebbe, that is what you are probably referring to. The wonderful mesiras nefesh for the mitzva of succah. That is why my face is shining.

The Rebbe says," No! that is not the reason, tell me something else. "The soldier is embarrassed as he says that when he returned to the camp, he didn't just go straight to sleep, but was so excited from accomplishing his goal in doing the mitzva, that he danced around for four hours until it was the next day!

The Rebbe said, "that's what it was, the excitement of the mitzvah."

This is what the Torah is telling us over here. **וְלֹא שָׂמֵחְתִּי** – It doesn't mean the actual act of making the bracha, but the excitement in valuing the opportunity to carry out the mitzvah.

This is something that we have to work on and Be'ezras Hashem, if we do, then we will take on and do every mitzvah as a tremendous opportunity with joy and excitement.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

For your own needs, trust in Hashem. For the needs of others, be the one Hashem sends to help. ~ R' Moshe Leib Sassover zt"l

Shabbos Treasures The Precious Gift of Shabbos

The Great *Amoraim* of the *Gemara* would busy themselves on *Erev Shabbos* with tasks to help honor Shabbos. Rava would salt the fish for the *seudos*. Rav Huna would light lamps in the house. Rav Pappa would make wicks for the lamps. Rav Chisda would cut the vegetables very fine. Rabbah and Rav Yosef would split wood. R' Zeira would start the fires that were used for cooking. R' Nachman bar Yitzchok would clean the house and carry things in for Shabbos (*Shabbos* 119a).

We learn from here that *everyone* should help prepare for Shabbos! No one should say that any chore is beneath them, or not good enough for them to do (*Orach Chaim* 250:1).

Especially when Shabbos starts very early, everyone should put in extra effort to help get the house ready for Shabbos. Also, if one sees that Shabbos is close to starting and some things aren't done yet, one should work with all of their energy just to get everything ready (*Mishnah Brurah* 250:4).

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ולקחתם מראשית כל פרי האדמה...ושמת בטנא והלכת אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך לשכן שמו שם *"That you shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground... and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that G-d, your G-d, will choose, to make His name rest there."* (26:2)

The *Mishnah* (*Bikkurim* ch. 3) describes in minute detail and picturesque language how these fruits were gathered, packed, and carried on the shoulders of the pilgrims all the way to the Holy Temple, and how the dignitaries greeted their brethren with music and song.

Bikkurim is included among the items that *"ein lahem shiyur"* — have no specified quantities (*Pei'ah* 1:1). One might observe

this *mitzvah* by giving anything — one cluster of grapes, or a few dates or olives — for an entire orchard. Another contribution was*ma'aseir sheini*. This was also to be brought to Jerusalem, but quietly without pageantry and fanfare. No special tribute was paid to the farmer for his gift, and no music was played in his honour.

Why did the bringing of the first fruits arouse joy and excitement while the giving of tithes occurred without notice?

The farmer works very hard, tilling his land, pruning his trees, and trying to keep the insects from ruining his crops. Finally, after much anxiety and toil, he beholds the first ripe fruit. What joy floods his heart! He would like to taste the fruit or give it to his wife and children, but he cannot, for the first ripe fruits belong to Hashem. So he takes a blade of grass, ties it to the fruit and calls it "*Bikkurim*." He then takes the fruit to the *Beit Hamikdash* in Jerusalem, where special tribute is paid to him for having the strength of character and loyalty to Hashem to give even before seeing his full harvest.

Ma'aseir sheini, on the other hand, comes much later. At the conclusion of the harvest, when the produce of the land is stored safely in the storehouse, the tithe is given. Giving at so late a date, when the farmer's granaries and storehouses are packed to overflowing, does not deserve special recognition or tribute. It is a duty performed in accordance with the requirements of the law, but no more.

The lesson for us is; it is not how much one gives, but when and how.
(הרב דוב ארי' ז"ל בערזאן)

"Give a poor man a dollar, and you become a Baal Tzedakah. Give it with a smile, and you become a Baal Chessed!"

ולקחת מראשית כל פרי האדמה "You shall take from the first of every fruit of the ground." (26:2)



Rashi writes, "A person goes down into his field and when he sees a ripe fig, he would wrap a *'gemi'* — a blade of grass — around it, and declare, 'This is *bikurim*.' " Why particularly a *gemi?*

A farmer works hard ploughing his field, tilling the soil, and seeding the ground. When he comes into the field and sees fruit beginning to grow, he may be carried away with his success thinking, *"Kochi ve'otzem yadi asah li et hachayil hazeh"* — "My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth" (8:17) and forget that the wonders of nature are in reality the works of Hashem.

The word *"gemi"* (**גמי**) is an acronym for **גדולים מעשה י-ה-ו-ה** — "Great are the wonders of Hashem." When the farmer sees the toil of his hands reaching fruition and the fruit beginning to cover the ground, he should immediately tie a *"gemi"* to it — realize that it is the great work of Hashem and praise Him for it. (**ר' משה זצ"ל מסאסוב**)

"וירעו אתנו המצרים ויענונו" - *"The Egyptians mistreated us and afflicted us."* (26:6)

Instead of **וירעו אתנו** — which literally means "they made us bad" — it should have said *"vayarei'u lanu"* — "they treated us badly"?

The Jewish people are exemplified by their character traits. They are known to be merciful, bashful, and kind (*Yevamot* 79a).

In Egypt, under Egyptian bondage, the Jews were exposed to inhumane treatment, causing them to lose their unique instincts and emotions and ultimately transforming them into bad people. Thus,

through affliction and hard labour — **וירעו אתנו המצרים** — the Egyptians *made us* bad people. (**אלשיך**)



"ואמרת לפני ה' אלקיך בערתי הקדש מן הבית וגם נתתיו ללוי"
***"Then you shall say before G-d, your G-d, 'I have removed the holy things from the house, and I have also given it to the Levite."* (26:13)**

A story is told about a wealthy, religious person who decided to give up his relationship with Hashem and sold his *tallit*, *tefillin*, and all holy items which he had in his house. At night he had a dream during which he continuously was shown the *pasuk*, **בערתי הקדש מן הבית** — "I have removed the holy things from the house." Puzzled, he went to the Rabbi for an explanation.

The Rabbi knew what the wealthy person had done and told him that if he were to take the first letters of these four words, **בַערתי הַקדש מַן הַבית** — "I have removed the holy things from the house" — and put them together, it would spell the word **בהמה** — "animal."

Thus, you dreamt at night about the way you acted by day. (**עיטורי תורה**)



"וכתבת על האבנים את כל דברי התורה הזאת באר היטב"
***"You shall inscribe on the stones all the words of this Torah, well clarified."* (27:8)**

Rashi comments that the Torah was written in seventy languages. Where is there an indication of seventy languages in the *pasuk*?

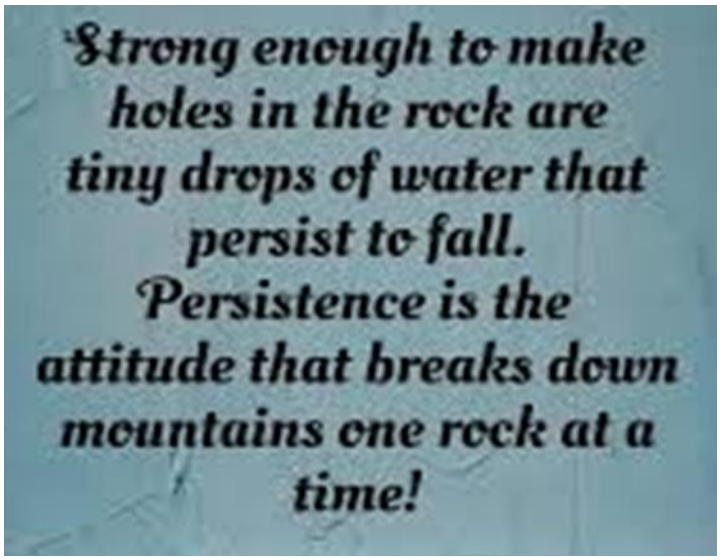
In the study of numerology, known in Torah as *gematria*, there are many different methods of calculation. One method is "cumulative calculation," in which the numerical value of the letter is added to the cumulative total numerical value of the letters preceding it.

Thus, the word "*heitev*" (**היטב**) adds up to 70 as follows: ה=5, י+ה, 10+5=15, ט+ה-י, 9+15=24, ב+ה-י-ט, 2+24=26.

The total of 5+15+24+26 is 70. Consequently, the extra word **היטב** — "well clarified" — is an indication that it was "well clarified" by being translated into 70 languages. (**שפתי חכמים**)

"וכתבת על האבנים את כל דברי התורה הזאת" "You shall inscribe on the stones all the words of this Torah." (27:8)

Why on stone and not on any other material?



The great sage, Rabbi Akiva, was an illiterate shepherd up to the age of forty. He once came across a stone which water had dripped on for a long time, eventually boring a hole in it. From this he concluded that if water can penetrate a hard stone, surely Torah could penetrate his heart of flesh and blood (*Avot DeRabbi Natan* 6).

By instructing Moshe to write the Torah on hard stone, G-d implied that even if a person possesses the poorest faculties (a head as hard as a rock), if he learns Torah diligently it will definitely have an indelible effect on him and refine him physically and spiritually. (**חידושי הרי"ם**)

"A Jew never stands alone. The spark of holiness within him connects him to all of Israel, and through that bond he receives strength beyond his own." ~ Sfas Emes.

"ברוך אתה בבאך" "Blessed shall you be when you come in." (28:6)

What shall be the blessing *"bevo'acha"* — "when you come in"?

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 57b) says that three things help a person achieve *harchavat hada'at* — self esteem and contentment: 1) *"Bayit na'eh"* (בית) — "a nice home." 2) *"Ishah na'eh"* (אשה) — "a nice wife." 3) *"Keilim na'im"* (כלים) — "nice vessels."

The acronym for these three spell the word *"bo'acha"* (**באך**).

The Torah is promising us that if you will hearken to the voice of Hashem, then *Baruch ata"* — "You will be blessed *bevo'acha* — with *"bo'acha"* — a nice home, a nice wife, and nice vessels, and you will enjoy *harchavat hada'at* all the days of your life.(**פני דוד**)

"ברוך אתה בעיר ברוך אתה בשדה" *"Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the field."* (28:3)

Why doesn't it simply state that you shall be blessed everywhere?

The patriarch Yitzchak had two sons, Yaakov and Eisav. Eisav was a skilled hunter and is described in the Torah as *"ish sadeh"* — "a man of the field." On the other hand, Yaakov was a Torah scholar and is described as *"yosheiv ohalim"* — "dweller in tents" — which means that he was a city dweller (*Bereishit* 25:27).

Originally, Yitzchak wanted to bless Eisav, but Yaakov managed to obtain the blessing instead. In response to his plea, Eisav was also blessed.

The Torah promises us that for listening to Hashem and observing His commandments one will merit *all* the blessings: Both those of *"ba'ir,"* which were given to Yaakov — the city dweller — as well as those of *"basadeh,"* which were given to Eisav — the man of the fields. (**שער בת רבים**)

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"ונשארתם במתי מעט תחת אשר הייתם ככוכבי השמים לרב"
***"You will be left few in number, instead of having been like the stars of heaven in abundance."* (28:62)**



Sometimes the number of the Jewish people is compared to the dust of the earth (*Bereishit* 28:14), and sometimes to the stars of the heaven (ibid. 15:5). Why, in our *pasuk*, is the analogy of the stars used?

The number of stars and the number of dust particles are both very large, but there is a major difference between them. The dust particles of the earth are mingled together and in close contact. The stars, however, are separated by vast distances. When there is unity among the Jews, they are compared to the dust of the earth, and when they are divided, they are compared to the stars of the heaven.

The word "*tachat*" can also mean "because" as in, "*tachat asher lo avadeta*" — "because you did not serve..." (28:47). The Torah is saying, "You will be left few in number, *tachat* — *because* — you were [disunited] like the stars of the heaven." (**מעינה של תורה**)

"A person can change his entire life with one honest moment of truth. When the heart opens even slightly, Hashem opens the rest." ~ Rav Yaakov Galinsky.

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"תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב"
***"Because you did not serve G-d, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart."* (28:47)**

According to the *Midrash*, the curse came upon the Jewish people for not properly enjoying the *Shabbat*. Where is there an indication of this in the *pasuk*?

The word "*tachat*" literally means "under." If the letters of the *alef-beit* are written in a vertical line starting with "**א**" on top, then "**ב**" is under "**א**", and "**ת**" is under "**שׂ**", and "**שׂ**" is under "**ר**". These three letters (**ב, ת, ש**) can be arranged to spell the word "*Shabbat*" (**שבת**).

The *pasuk* is hinting to us that the punishment will come, G-d forbid, since "*tachat asher*" — [on the day which is] under "*asher*" (**אשר**) — i.e. "*Shabbat*" (**שבת**) — you did not serve Hashem by celebrating it with gladness and goodness of heart.

(לקוטי בשם הגר"א, ועי' אגרא דכלה. ובענין חיוב שמחה בשבת עי' תורה תמימה ולקוטי שיחות)

Based on a story from "Gut Voch" by Avrohom Barash

After WWII, many people, knowing they would not have anyone to say Kaddish for them when they died, gave money to Yeshivos to hire someone to do it for them. In the Chevron Yeshiva, someone suggested to **R' Yechezkel Sarna z"l** (Yahrtzeit 11 Elul), that a certain kollel fellow who was brilliant and studious yet destitute, be given the job as he could use the money.

R' Chatzkel demurred, saying it was beneath the dignity of the scholar as this was usually done by the shammes. The fellow was shocked, then, when R' Yechezkel himself announced that he would

be saying the Kaddish for those who had paid! Had the Rosh Yeshiva decided to keep the money himself?

The mystery was solved a few weeks later when R' Chatzkel told his secretary that it was too much for him and that he should request the poor Kollel fellow relieve him of his duties. Once the Rosh Yeshiva had been doing the job himself, it was not a slight to the Talmid Chacham.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP] - Thanks for the Memories… Thanks for All that You Have Done for Me

וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל־פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה

"You shall take of the first of every fruit… You shall say before Hashem, "An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather… Hashem took us out of Egypt… And now I have brought the first fruit of the ground that You have given me…" (Devarim 26:1-12)

A farmer in the Land of Israel has numerous special mitzvos to do. One of them is the mitzvah of Bikurim.

Each year, the first ripened fruits grown in Israel that appear from the seven, special species (that the Land of Israel is praised for – wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates) are brought to the Holy Temple and presented to the kohen. The farmer reads numerous psukim expressing his gratitude to Hashem. He expresses gratitude for many events in Jewish history. He thanks Hashem for saving Yaakov Avinu from the death-plot of Lavan, for making us a strong, great and numerous Nation in Egypt, from a mere 70 people, for redeeming us from Egypt with great miracles, for giving us the Land of Israel, and for helping him (this farmer) have a successful harvest.

This is puzzling. When the farmer brings the first fruits to Hashem, why doesn't he simply say, "Thank you Hashem for causing my food to grow"? That would be enough to show his realization that his

successful harvest was due to Hashem and not to his own efforts. That would indicate his gratitude to Hashem. Why does the Torah instruct him to give a history lesson, starting from Lavan's desire to kill Yaakov?

Rav Mordechai Gifter, zt"l , has an interesting explanation of a different pasuk which may help us understand our difficulty, here: It is not enough to be grateful for the good we receive. We must think and reflect on the entire context of that good. We must think about how bad and desperate our previous situation was before we received a kindness from a person. The more we are aware of this and reflect on it, the more we will appreciate the current act of kindness.

By the mitzvah of Bikurim, the more that we are aware of all the events leading to the Bikurim, the more appreciation we will have to Hashem. The psukim that the farmer says, serve this purpose.

There are many people to whom we must show appreciation to, especially to our parents and teachers. If we can visualize all the good that our parents have done for us starting from the time **before** our births until now, we will have a greater appreciation for them. That greater appreciation will lead to stronger feelings of love and respect for them.

When it comes to appreciation, view the total picture, from beginning to end! Then you will realize how much more you need to be thankful for.

"The greatest kindness Hashem does for a person is to show him his own shortcomings. For when a person sees where he must grow, he is given the key to his own perfection, and no gift is greater than that." ~ Rav Yerucham Levovitz.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



An elderly Jew once approached **Rav Yissachar Ber of Belz**, and said that he wished to do *Teshuvah* for all the *aveiros* he had committed when he was young. Rav Yisschar Ber told him, "You can indeed do that, if you are truly sorry about your sins." "But Rebbe," the man asked, "How can I tell what 'truly sorry' means?"

Rav Yissachar Ber answered him with the following story. "There was a merchant who would always come every year to the fair with many wagonloads of goods to sell. One year, he decided to arrive a little earlier than usual, and he was among the first to arrive at the fair.

Soon after he had set up his booth, it began raining fiercely. It rained so hard that no other merchant was able to get to the fair, and since he was one of the only ones there with goods to sell, all the buyers came to him, each trying to outbid the other. However, instead of selling anything, the merchant decided to wait. That afternoon, the bids for his merchandise were even higher, but again he decided to wait and refused to sell anything.

It continued like this for the next two days and the bids kept getting higher and higher, and finally, the merchant felt that the bids were high enough, and the next day he would sell his wares to the highest bidder. That night, as he slept well and dreamt of the wonderful profit he was going to make, the rains died away, and by morning, all the other merchants had arrived at the fair. With so much more

competition, all the prices fell, and the merchant was forced to sell his goods at very low prices."

Rav Yissachar Ber continued, "Now, if you are as sorry about your previous sins as that merchant was about not having sold his goods sooner at the higher prices, you will know that you have truly repented!"

Shabbos Treasures The Precious Gift of Shabbos



We have a mitzvah of *Kavod Shabbos*, honouring Shabbos, and the *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (119a) gives some examples of how being careful with honouring Shabbos will bring many riches. There are many other great things that await someone who honours Shabbos properly. *Sefer Devarim Niflaim al Shabbos Kodsheinu* mentions that if we are careful with *Kavod Shabbos*, it will help protect us from doing *aveiros*, even during the week. Also, Shabbos keeps us safe from danger. Additionally, *Eitz Yosef* writes (*Otzar HaTefilos*, p. 768) that if you spend money in honour of Shabbos and in order to enjoy Shabbos, Hashem will pay you back double what you spent!

"The measure of chessed is not the size of the act but the heart with which it is done. A small kindness with sincerity rises to the highest places." ~ Rav Chaim Shmulevitz.

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

The *Baal Shem Tov* called the days of Elul, "The days when the King is in the field". He explained this with a *mashal*.



Normally, in order to gain an audience with a king, one must go through a lengthy procedure. He first needs to travel to the city where the king lives, arrange an appointment, and then get permission to enter the palace. Even when permission is granted, it may be days or weeks before he is finally allowed to enter. When he does finally get to see the king, the meeting is likely to be short and very formal. The citizen, not used to the royal surroundings, will surely feel out of place, and maybe even regret his decision to arrange to see the king in the first place. From his great fear and uneasiness, he may also forget to put his request before the king.

Once a year, this king leaves his palace to visit the various regions of his kingdom, and when he reaches the outskirts of the city he is visiting, his entourage sets up a camp and a special delegation goes ahead to the city to make preparations for the king's visit. In the meantime, 'the king is in the field', waiting to make his grand entrance. The formality that exists in the palace does not occur in the field, and the common folk are allowed to come out to greet the king and receive his blessings.

The *Baal Shem Tov* explains that it is similar during the month of Elul. Hashem the King is 'in the field' and He is easily accessible to us. We need only make the effort to go out and greet Him!

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

In a *shiur*, **Rabbi Paysach Krohn** emphasized that giving *Tzedakah* doesn't mean just to give money, but it also means doing *Chessed*, acts of kindness with others. He related a story that displays tremendous *Chessed shel Ahavah*, loving kindness.

Out of care for another, a woman went to pay a *Shiva* call to a woman she had never met, who was sitting *Shiva* for her husband who had passed away. Before leaving, she said, "Please tell me something about your husband." His wife said, "My husband never delayed doing a *Chessed*. Any time someone asked him for a favour or if he would have a chance to help someone, he would always do it immediately, and never delay the kindness."

She left the house, and as she was driving, she saw in another car, a woman who was fast asleep. She thought to herself, "This person is probably very tired, and thought she would catch a few minutes to rest while she waited to pick up one of her children from the bus stop." She thought very little of it and wanted to continue driving on her way, telling herself that if someone wanted to rest in her car, it was really none of her business.



However, something didn't look right about the way this woman was sleeping, perhaps the way her head was tilted, and she suddenly remembered what the lady sitting *Shiva* told her, *'My husband never delayed doing a Chessed'*, so she pulled over to the side of the road and called Hatzalah. She told them, "There's a lady in her car, and I'm just not sure if she's sleeping or if something is

wrong. Can you please come and check if she's all right?" Hatzalah was there in an instant, and soon after, one of the Hatzalah members came over to her and said, "You saved this woman's life. She was in diabetic shock. If she remained in the car like that for another 20 minutes, she would have died." The woman was stunned.

A few months later, the woman who was saved called her and said, "I know I have thanked you so much for saving my life, but I wanted to tell you that I am expecting a child. You actually saved two lives that day!"

Rabbi Krohn taught that this all happened because she took the time to notice a stranger and was caring enough to make a phone call on her behalf, which only took place because she didn't push off doing a *Chessed*!

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב: כח:מז

Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with gladness and goodness of heart. *(28:47)*

The *Mitzvos* that we do must be done with joy. **Rav Munk** in his *Sefer* 'Darchei Noam' points out something amazing: Many times we hold ourselves back from *Netilas Yadayim* and *Birchas Ha'motzi* so that we do not have to say *Birchas HaMazon*. That is, it seems that *Birchas HaMazon* is a burden for us… where is the joy? **Rav Azriel Tauber** says: "Today, many people are on a diet. They eat crackers and bran and similar grains, but not bread which causes them to gain weight. Although the diet is truly important, still, they should try to eat even a small piece of bread in order to say *Birchas HaMazon* 'with gladness and goodness of heart', which is a *Mitzvah* in the *Torah*!" (***Umatok HaOhr***)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן לך ה' אלקיך And you should rejoice with all the good that Hashem has given you. 26:11

The *Ohr HaChaim Ha'kadosh* writes that the words *B'Chol HaTov*, all the good, is referring to the *Torah*, as we learn in *Pirkei Avos*, **אין טוב אלא תורה**, there is no good other than Torah.



If a person would be able to feel how good and sweet the Torah is, he would do anything he could to go after it, and he would be taken over with a drive to get more *Torah*. Entire worlds filled with silver and gold would be meaningless in his eyes, because he has become aware of how sweet the *Torah* is and that the *Torah* includes in it, all the good of the entire world.

When the ***Chofetz Chaim*** would talk about *Mitzvos*, he would kiss his fingers and say, "It's so delicious! It's so sweet!"

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן ה' אלקיך... כו:יא

You shall rejoice with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given to you… (26:11)

The *Tzadik*, **Rebbe Moshe Leib of Sasov, *zt"l***, explains, when will you rejoice *'with all the goodness'*? When you appreciate that all you have is what *'Hashem, your G-d, has given to you'*.

We must realize that everything is given to us by *Hashem*, and nothing comes to us by way of man. It is better to have one *Kav* (a small measure) that comes from *Hashem* with tranquillity and calmness **שלווה ובנחת**, than ten *Kavim* that come by way of toil through man.

Rav Nachman of Breslev (the great-grandson of the ***Baal Shem Tov***) explains this *Pasuk* to mean that even when a person cries before *Hashem*, the crying must come from joy **שמחה** and not from grief **עצבות**.

The hint to this is that the letters of the word **בכיה** stand for **בְּשִׁמְךָ יְגִילוּן כָּל הַיּוֹם** , ***In Your Name they rejoice all day long.*** (*Tehillim* 89:17) (***Parperaos LaTorah***)

Pearls of Wisdom…*A Word for the Ages*

Rav Shabsi of Rashkov, *zt"l*, describes in his writings on the *Siddur* the greatness of saying *L'Dovid* twice a day from *Rosh Chodesh Elul* until *Simchas Torah*. One who does this will be guaranteed that his years will be found to be good, and it will be delightful for him. Even if there was an evil decree in *Shamayim* written against a person, saying *L'Dovid* is capable of having it nullified. All the different types of prosecuting angels will be removed from upon him, and all the harsh and evil decrees upon him will be abolished, allowing him to emerge innocent and exonerated from the judgement.

This is because from *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, the thirteen wellsprings of the thirteen Attributes of *Hashem's* mercy are opened and are flowing down to us. It is for this reason that the merciful Name of *Hashem* is mentioned thirteen times in the *Perek* of *L'Dovid*! (***Tiv HaEmunah***)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, *zt"l*, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Ner Yisroel, was a *Gadol Ha'dor*, and he once travelled to *Eretz Yisroel*. It was a very special trip for him because he did not go there very often. When he was there, he met with some of the *Gedolei Ha'dor*, and dealt with issues that were facing *Klal Yisroel*. When he returned from his trip, his *Talmidim* asked him what the most special part of his trip was.



Rav Ruderman smiled and said, "The best part of my trip was that I was able to buy a *Mantel* (cover) for a *Sefer Torah*!"

The *Talmidim* were confused. They knew that it was a special thing to do, but that could also be done in America. Why was this the highlight of their *Rebbe's* trip?

Rav Ruderman explained to them, "I met a special young *Talmid Chacham*, and I spoke with him in learning, and as we spoke, I realized that I was speaking with someone who actually knew *Kol HaTorah Kulah*— he knew the entire *Torah*! Also as we spoke, I noticed that the jacket he was wearing was worn out and torn, and I asked him if I could buy him a new one. He didn't want me to, but as I persisted, he finally agreed, and he allowed me to get him a new jacket. I understood that this person was a living *Sefer Torah*, and I was *Zocheh* to buy a jacket, which was the *Mantel* for this *Sefer Torah*!"

The students were amazed that this was their *Rebbe's* highlight from his trip, but they learned a tremendous lesson in honouring a *Talmid Chacham*.

Who was this 'living *Sefer Torah*' that Rav Ruderman met?

It was Rav Chaim Kanievsky!

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS KI SAVO

Striving for A Minyan



Horav Chaim Toito, Shlita, relates an incident that occurred concerning **Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, zl**, The Mashgiach of Kaminetz, Yerushalayim.

When Rav Moshe Aharon was a lad of eight years old, he became deathly ill. His parents took him to the finest doctors, the biggest specialists. They responded, "Say a prayer." Tehillim was all that was left for them to do. People recited Tehillim for him around the clock. One day, his father looked at him and said, "Look, everyone is reciting Tehillim for you; everyone is petitioning Hashem for your speedy recovery – everyone – but you."

The young boy asked his father, "What should I do? I, too, am reciting Tehillim. Is there anything else I can do?"

His father replied, "Accept upon yourself a hanhagah tovah, good practice, a special deed to which you will commit yourself, regardless of the circumstances."

"Does Father have a suggestion for me?" the boy asked. His father thought a moment and replied, "Yes. Accept upon yourself that, upon being cured from this illness, you commit yourself to always daven with a minyan."

The young boy agreed to accept this policy as a commitment for life. Indeed, he doubled down on his learning, his yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, and strengthened his minyan attendance. He would go out of his way to see to it that, under all circumstances, he would daven with a minyan.

Once he became Mashgiach of Kamenitz, his duties changed commensurably. He now had to shoulder responsibility for maintaining the fiscal obligations of the yeshivah. As the yeshivah grew in size, his obligations also grew. It meant taking off time from the yeshivah to travel to the diaspora to raise funds for the yeshivah. While this presented a problem concerning the time he spent with his students, it also presented a logistical nightmare with regard to his commitment to daven with a minyan.

Therefore, whenever he purchased a ticket to travel out of the country, he made sure that either there was a minyan on the plane or he took a flight that had a layover which afforded him the opportunity to locate and daven with a minyan. Once, on a trip to America, he asked the agent if there would be a minyan at the airport.

The response was to be expected, "It is an airport, not a shul." He could not promise him a minyan, but, if there were enough observant Jewish travellers (which there are at Ben Gurion airport), there would be a minyan. If minyan was so important to him, however, the agent suggested that the Mashgiach take a stopover flight which

would allow him a few hours to leave the airport, locate a shul and daven before returning for the continuation of his flight.

Thus, on his next flight to the United States, he booked a flight that had a layover in Amsterdam. He figured he would have sufficient time to take a taxi from the airport to a shul, daven and return in time for his flight to the States. The plane landed in Amsterdam for a two-hour layover. He walked outside the terminal and searched for a taxi/car service.

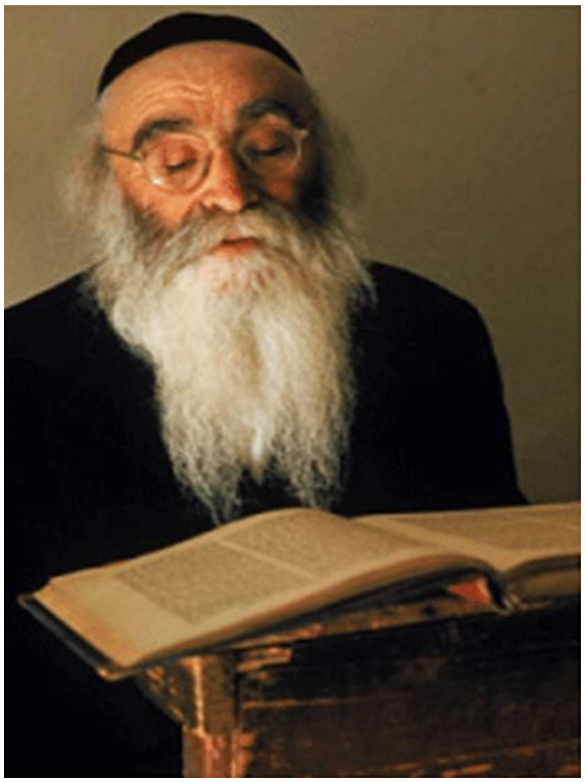
He had been standing there a few moments when a car pulled up, and the driver asked him in Ivrit, "Where is the Rav going?" Rav Moshe Aharon replied, "I require a minyan." During the trip, the driver informed the Mashgiach that he lived outside of the city, and every morning he drove into the city to daven and go to work.

After a short while, the car came to a stop in a small alley. They alighted and went into a small shul, in which were assembled eight Jews, who were waiting for two more Jews to complete the minyan. The Mashgiach davened and returned to the airport in time for his flight. He did not miss davening with a minyan.

When the Mashgiach related this story, his eyes shone brightly as he would say, "Imagine, eight Jews arise in the morning prepared to daven, knowing that they are eight; number nine must drive in from the suburbs and they must hope that number ten will somehow, from somewhere, materialize. This time they were "gifted" a Jew who was travelling to the United States whose commitment to minyan was so strong that he was 'availed' the opportunity to join their minyan."

We derive from here that just, rotzeh leilech, wanting to go in a certain direction, is insufficient. One must commit strongly to this path. Then he can be assured that, if he commits bah, to it, with strong intention, he will be led there. He must, however, have a bah," a specific, unequivocal commitment to "it."

Rav Aryeh Levin *zt"l*



He was known as many things – the *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, a father figure to prisoners, and the father-in-law of **Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv *zt"l***. To every person, he was something else. Native *Yerushalmim* and underground fighters, Ashkenazim and Sephardim, *chilonim* and religious Jews – all of them revered him, each for their own reasons. He was always there for the downtrodden – the poor, the despondent, the weak, and the imprisoned. Even lepers benefited from his kindness.

Rav Aryeh Levin *zt"l* was one of the few people who were willing to enter the lepers' hospital in Yerushalayim. The title that stuck to him permanently, though, was that of ***"father of the prisoners,"*** as he was called by the men of the underground, headed by Menachem Begin, the commander of Etzel, and Yair Stern, the leader of Lechi. The British recognized his status, even though it was unofficial, and they habitually summoned him before executing a prisoner.

Many people were enthralled by the stories of Rav Aryeh's incredible humility and sensitivity to other human beings. One of the most famous stories is about an incident when Rav Aryeh accompanied his wife to an appointment with a doctor. When the doctor asked him what was wrong, Rav Aryeh said, "Doctor, my wife's leg hurts us" – not "her," but "us." He related to her pain as if it was his own.

Rav Aryeh was filled with love for his fellow Jews. He once received a pair of gloves as a gift, but he refused to wear them. "How can I shake another Jew's hand while wearing gloves?" he asked. "I won't feel him…"

The *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim was deeply admired by the *chilonim*. Much was written about the underground fighters and right-wing political leaders who revered Rav Aryeh, and to whom Rav Aryeh himself showed bountiful affection. The Mizrachi movement also prided themselves on their close relationships with him. In truth, Rav Aryeh was close to everyone, and he showed tremendous respect to every person.

It can be said that Rav Aryeh pioneered the concept of being *mekarev* other Jews. Indeed, Rav Aryeh was personally responsible for drawing many Jews back to *Yiddishkeit*. He once delivered a *drashah* in which he asserted, "*Tochachah* is one of the aspects of *ahavas Yisroel*. If you examine the *pesukim* carefully, you will see that the *mitzvah* of *tochachah* appears between two other statements: 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart' and 'You shall love your fellow like yourself.' That teaches us the nature of genuine *tochachah*. The *tochachah* that is desired is one that comes from a pure source. It should stem not from hatred, but from love."

In other words, a person must love his fellow Jews, but he must also rebuke them when necessary. This was a balance that was epitomized by Rav Aryeh.

An article about Rav Aryeh relates, "If you ever walk in the neighbourhood of Mishkenos in Yerushalayim, and you suddenly find yourself facing a man who is stooped over, with a white beard and a face that radiates sanctity, and with eyes that seem to be gently, lovingly assessing you, and if you immediately feel that some void within you has suddenly been filled, that something is freeing you from the chains that have been holding you – then you will know that it is Rav Aryeh Levin, the father of prisoners, who is freeing you almost exactly as he did in the days when you were imprisoned in the literal sense."

The Miracle of Early Shabbat By Asharon Baltazar



Faint snatches of conversation floating through the tiny house caught Avraham Simcha's attention. Although he was in a hurry to return to his studies at the *yeshivah*, the exchange between his elderly hosts momentarily held him back.

"Today is *erev Shabbat*," he heard the wife say. "Please be back on time."

"Of course," reassured her husband. "I'll do some shopping and will return home soon. Don't worry."

"Please don't be late," urged the woman.

A few hours later, as he returned from *yeshivah*, Avraham Simcha noticed a silhouette occupying the small, front window. It was his elderly hostess, her face lined with worry as she stared into the distance. Even when he stepped inside, she continued to look through the window, absentmindedly muttering to the glass, "Who knows what might have happened? It's almost Shabbat, it's almost Shabbat…"

Avraham Simcha was puzzled. "But Shabbat is still far off. I'm sure he'll be back by then."

The elderly woman smiled, and without looking away from the window, said, "Let me you tell you a story, and perhaps you'll understand."

"For many years, we were childless and felt a gaping hole in our lives. We slogged through misery every day. Finally, our prayers produced a miracle: I gave birth to a beautiful boy.

"But our troubles soon returned. We noticed that our son was growing rather slowly. Anxious, we took him to a doctor who diagnosed him with a heart defect. He suggested we travel to Vilna, where the medicine was more advanced, if we wanted to save him.



Rabbi Avraham Simcha Kaplan (1911-1989) was the rav of Safed for more nearly half a century.

"We set off at once and found a renowned cardiologist in Vilna. After countless examinations and tests, the cardiologist took us aside and revealed the horrible truth: There was no cure for our son's condition; he probably wouldn't survive for more than a few years.

"We stumbled back to our inn, biting back tears, but the moment we closed the door to our room I burst into uncontrollable wails. Imagine having to hear such news about a child you were barely blessed with!

"Suddenly, we heard a knock. It was one of the neighbors sharing our floor. They heard me crying and suggested that on our way back we stop in Radin, Poland, home of **Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Kagan—"the Chafetz Chaim"**—to request his blessing.

"We left for Radin and we soon stood on the Chafetz Chaim's doorstep only to be turned away. We were told that due to the Chafetz Chaim's deteriorating health, he wouldn't be granting any private audiences. We felt dazed, our last hope dashed, and barely managed to keep our balance.

"But then we caught sight of a familiar face inside the house. It was the Chafetz Chaim's grandson who had once boarded with us while learning at the Mir *yeshivah*. Emotionally, we explained to him why

we had come, and he beckoned the three of us to enter his grandfather's room.

"'Why did you come to me?' asked the Chafetz Chaim.

We repeated our story again.

"'How can I help?' shrugged the Chafetz Chaim, looking around his room. 'I don't even have the money to allow you to see greater doctors.'

"I couldn't handle it and broke down in tears. The grandson stepped in between us.

"'This is their only son," he said, pointing at my boy. The Chafetz Chaim stared, his expression poignant. Then he looked at me.

"'I would like you to welcome Shabbat earlier than usual.'

"'What must I do?'

"'By Friday noon,' said the Chafetz Chaim slowly, making sure I understood, 'the dining room table should already be adorned by a tablecloth, candlesticks, and candles. After the candles are lit at the proper time, make certain that all work ceases.'

"'I accept,' I said, while thinking that if he had asked me to fast for two years, I would've happily done that as well.

"The first signs of recovery were already apparent by the time we arrived home. My son's condition improved from day to day, and as he began to eat healthily, he regained the much-necessary weight. Our local doctor was so astounded by our son's recovery that he himself funded an additional trip to Vilna so the cardiologist there could witness the miracle.

"After seeing the boy's improvement for himself, the cardiologist kept asking whether this was the same boy he had examined not long ago.

"'Perhaps you took the boy to the doctors in Vienna?'

"'We did not.'

"'So who did you take him to?'

"'The Chafetz Chaim,' we said, swelling with pride. 'We follow his instructions.'

"The doctor shook his head in amazement. 'Doctors are limited to healing existent phenomena, but to create something from nothing is impossible.'"

The old hostess finished her story and turned her glance to Avraham Simcha. "Now you can understand why I so urgently await my husband's return."

True Empathy

R' Refoel Levine, the son of the renowned tzaddik, **R' Aryeh Levine**, was a remarkable tzaddik in his own right. Like his father, his tziddkus was most evident in his tremendous concern and love for his fellow Jews, especially those who were in need of support and encouragement.

One Motzei Shabbos, R' Refoel was walking to the Kosel with a talmid when a man approached him to say hello. R' Refoel answered him and asked him how his wife and children were doing. Apparently, the man's family life was a difficult one because he spent the next few hours pouring his heart out. R' Refoel listened intently the entire time, and offered the man words of comfort.

He sent him off with heartfelt brachos and sent regards to his family. He reassured the man that he was davening for him as he said goodbye.

R' Refoel's talmid was curious about who this man was, after seeing how much time the rabbi had devoted to him. "Who was that man?" he asked.

R' Refoel responded, "I don't know. This is something I learned from my father. If someone greets you as if he recognizes you, you should respond to him in the same way."



Insensitive Remark to an Infertile Couple

A couple had been married for over twenty years, but unfortunately, they were not blessed with children. Year after year, they would go to doctor after doctor for treatment, and they poured their hearts out in their Davening, but nothing seemed to help.

Someone suggested to them that maybe they should move to Eretz Yisroel, because Chazal tell us that settling in Eretz Yisroel is a Segulah for having children.

They followed this advice and uprooted their lives, but three years later, there was still no change in their situation. One day, they bumped into an old friend, a neighbor from their former city. He inquired about how they were doing and when he heard that they were still waiting for children, in his simplemindedness, he tried to console them.

He said, "Please, don't be sad. If after twenty-three years nothing has changed, you have no reason to keep hoping for children. Don't worry, it's not the end of the world. There are many other Mitzvos in the Torah that you can fulfil." This man did not mean any harm, he was simply ignorant, and completely insensitive to their feelings. He saw their sadness, and he thought that he was comforting them and helping them, by giving them strength to carry on with their lives.

When this man returned home, he told his wife that he met the couple and what he had said to them. She scolded him harshly. She said, "How can you say such a thing to them? Why did you have to mix into their business? How can you be so insensitive to what they are going through?"

The man tried to defend himself and he replied to his wife, "They looked so sad and I just wanted to try and console them. I'm sure you would have done the same!"

But she wouldn't hear of it. She said, "How do you know they'll never have children? Even after all this time, how can you be so sure? You can't possibly know this. Jews never give up hope!"

The man thought for a moment and finally said, "You know what? If they do have children after twenty-three years, I will sell my entire business, move to Eretz Yisroel, and become a Kollel man! How would you like that?" She agreed to his off-hand proposition, and the subject didn't come up again.

Two years later, they heard the miraculous news that amazingly, after years of tearful Davening and hopeful treatments, the couple was Bentched with twins, a girl and a boy! It was the talk of the town, and everyone was elated. Everyone, except for this one man, whose wife reminded him of the deal he had made.



He very quickly learned his lesson about foolishly opening his mouth, but now it was too late, and he began to panic. He took the first flight he could get to Eretz Yisroel, and went straight to Bnei Brak to see **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Zt'l**.

As soon as he was allowed in, he told Rav Chaim the entire story, and he wanted to know what he should do. Rav Chaim didn't understand what the man was asking and said to him, "What's the question? You

should keep your word!" The man began to panic again, and with urgency he asked, "Rebbe, can I do Ha'taras Nedarim, and nullify my vow?"

Rav Chaim replied, "No! Your Neder was in the category of a Neder to do a Mitzvah, and that can't be nullified."

Practically hyperventilating, the man tried one last time and said, "Maybe I can appoint a Shaliach who will learn instead of me in Kollel? I will support him and provide him with all his needs, and he will not lack a thing!"

Rav Chaim looked at him and smiled, and said, "That's actually a good idea, to appoint a Shaliach. But you should do it in the opposite direction. You should learn in Kollel, and the Shaliach will run your business!" Rav Chaim then looked at the man and said, "You don't understand the power of what you did when you said that you would go learn in Kollel. It just might be that your commitment to learn was the Zechus this couple needed, and they might have had children because of this merit!"

Rav Shlomo Levenstein, Shlit"a, who told over this story, comments, "What Rav Chaim said is simply amazing! This man hadn't even begun learning yet. All he did was make a commitment to start learning, and already, in that Zechus, a barren woman had children! This should make it clear to everyone that learning Torah is oxygen! It provides vitality for the entire world. It causes barren woman to have children! It heals illnesses! Nothing is greater!"

"Torah is not acquired through brilliance alone. It is acquired through toil, through humility, through the willingness to hear the truth even when it is difficult. Only such a person becomes a vessel for Torah." ~ Rav Shach.

A Blonde Hair Jewish Teenage Girl in Nazi Germany

By Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn



"In October 1938, the hatred that the German populace had for Jews boiled like a hot cauldron on a raging fire. The German SS indiscriminately dragged Jews off the streets or from their homes, humiliated them and carted many off to slave labor camps, where torture and cruel death often awaited them.

R' Dovid Tzvi Cohen and his wife Sorah Zisel lived with their four children on Linien Strasse in the Jewish district of Berlin. Shops and stores owned by Jews lined the streets of the district, and dozens of shuls — many of them architecturally beautiful — were spread throughout the area.

The Cohens, who lived on the second floor of an apartment building, had friendly relations with their German gentile neighbors, particularly the Reinmann family, who lived on the third floor.

On Thursday morning, November 10,1938, Frau (Mrs.) Reinmann came downstairs and said to the Cohens with urgency, "I hear there is going to be a pogrom and it may even be today. You would be safer if you left this neighborhood for now." The Cohens had also heard rumors to that effect, but who could know which threat was real and which was not?

Frau Reinmann assured them that she had her information from reliable sources. Unbeknownst to the Cohens and most Jews, the night before at 11:55 p.m., Gestapo Chief Heinrich Mueller had sent a telegram to all police units ordering them not to interfere with actions that would be taking place against all Jews, especially their

synagogues. Fire companies were instructed not to protect the synagogues but to make sure that the flames did not spread to Aryan property.

Believing that Frau Reinmann may be correct, the Cohens decided to act at once and flee with their children to the other side of town, to the home of Mrs. Cohen's parents, Dovid Shaye and Braindel Shankal on Elsasser Strasse where few Jewish families resided. Surely it would be safer there to weather a possible storm of violence.

The Cohen's 12-year-old daughter Esther asked her parents if she could come to her grandparents an hour later. She wanted to finish her homework and she had all her books at home. Esther was a feisty child and her parents trusted her instincts. She knew the route to her grandparents' home and assured her parents she would be there as soon as possible.

The Cohens left with their three other children as Esther remained home alone. Within an hour, Esther heard wild screaming and rioting. She ran to a window facing the street and saw a mob of what seemed like a thousand people rampaging down Linien Strasse, roaring in piercing maniacal voices at the top of their lungs, "Get the Jews! Kill the Jews!"

She watched in terror as pandemonium reigned. The mob smashed windows, looted stores, threw rocks, hurled insults, and threatened the lives of Jews anywhere and everywhere throughout the Reich. Frau Reinmann was right. This was a pogrom of the worst order.

Esther knew she could not remain in the building for if she were found her life would be in danger. She was trapped. Trembling and isolated, she tried to devise a plan to save herself.

Esther began reciting any Tehillim she knew by heart, all the while thinking desperately of a plan of escape. She was often told that she didn't look Jewish because of her fair skin and blonde hair.

Perhaps now she could use that to her advantage. She tousled her hair and combed it the way the German girls in the Hitler Youth Association did. She looked into a mirror and was revolted at what she saw.

She was afraid, though, that it still wasn't enough of a decoy. She adjusted her jacket and clothes in a provocative way, so that no one could imagine she was an Orthodox Jewish girl. She hated dressing that way. She felt cheapened and degraded, but there was no choice. Her life hung in the balance.

She decided she would go outside and walk nonchalantly, hoping no one would suspect she was Jewish, for logically no Jewish girl in her right mind would brazenly walk among such an anti-Semitic mob. With the words of Tehillim on her lips, she reached up to kiss the mezuzah as she left her apartment. "Ribono Shel Olam, please save me," she whispered softly.

As she walked down the stairs in the hallway she suddenly remembered an expression she often heard from her mother, "Ahfilu fahr dee feer vent, darf mehn zich shemmen." ("Even for the four walls [in a home] one should feel shame.") Her mother meant to convey the message that tznius (modesty) was a code of behavior that was required even in the privacy of one's home. She was startled that those words would come to her just now. She rationalized that she had to look like "them" to spare her life. Surely her mother would understand and even encourage her behavior.

But now, in the empty darkened hallway she was having doubts. Perhaps this was a message from Above. Esther decided that come what may, she would not go out the way she was dressed. She re-buttoned her blouse to her neck, tucked it into her skirt and straightened the collar of her jacket, but kept her hair tousled.

As she walked out into the street the noise burst at her with a crescendo. She mumbled more words of Tehillim, making sure, however, that no one realized she was praying. The yelling and

screaming of the mob was deafening. She walked hesitantly, checking to see if the horde had reached her grandmother's fabric store on the first floor of their apartment building. (They had not reached it yet, but later the shop was looted and ransacked.)

She walked as quickly as she could, avoiding eye contact with anyone. She tried to keep to the middle of the street, away from the flying glass and swinging clubs that smashed into every Jewish window in sight. She tried not to panic as her mouth went dry from fear.

In 10 minutes, that seemed like ten days, she was past the mob. As soon as she was sure she wasn't being observed, she began to run as fast as she could.

When she came to her grandparents' home, she knocked on the door rapidly. Her heart was beating wildly as she waited for a response. Did her parents make it? Had the Nazis come here earlier? Was anyone home? The door opened and she ran right past her sister into her mother's arms and wept uncontrollably. The emotion and tension of the last hour burst forth in a torrent of tears. At first she could not speak, but kept looking back at the door, hoping she had not been followed. Then slowly, between sighs and sobs, she told her anxious parents and grandparents about her frightful experience.

When she finished, Mrs. Cohen took Esther's face in her hands and said softly, "Don't you realize my child, you saved your own life?" Esther was bewildered. "Esther," her mother said again, "look, you are wearing your gold necklace with a Mogen Dovid on it. Had you left your buttons open, the Mogen Dovid would have identified you as a Jew. Your mitzvah protected you without your even knowing it." Reflections of the Maggid, Reb Paysach Krohn, p. 32)

Although the Germans murdered her parents and most of her family in the holocaust, Esther Cohen, now Mrs. Esther Biller survived the war, later moving to Monsey, New York, where she lives today. Mrs. Biller and her husband, who recently passed away at the age of 91, and who also lost his family in the war, have taken revenge on the

Germans in the best way possible; namely, by being the grandparents and great-grandparents to probably over 250 grandchildren who are G-d-fearing Torah observant Jews, including the author of this weekly's wife."

Let us remember this story and remember that our holiness and success as a Nation depend on hiding that which must be hidden.

The Missed the Bus by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach



As the bus to Bnei Brak approached the young man at the Beit Shemesh stop, he put his hand in his pocket to take out the 13 shekels he had prepared for paying the fare. He was shocked to find only three shekels and decided to forgo that bus and go home to get the rest of the money.

No sooner had the bus pulled out than a neighbour pulled up in his car and asked him why he didn't get on the bus. Upon hearing his explanation, he informed him that he was driving to Bnei Brak and would be glad to give him a lift. They rode for a while behind the missed bus and suddenly saw it swerve off the road and fall into a deep gorge, an accident that resulted in injuries to many passengers.

Realizing that he had almost been on that bus the young man began to weep. He put his hand in his pocket to get a handkerchief to wipe his tears and what did he find hiding in it? The missing ten shekels!

The Sultan's Carpet By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton



This section (Parshas Ki Tavo) is unique because it contains ninety-eight curses awaiting the Jewish people if they refuse to serve G-d. Here the intelligent reader will probably ask himself, "Why so many curses?" Why can't G-d just make one big curse like:

"If you don't do My commandments I'll do terrible things"? Why such morbid detail? Even more; in Parshat 'Bhaalotcha', G-d already gave us forty-nine curses! Why do we need another list twice as long?

I want to answer this with a story.

Once, some one hundred years ago, in a small house in the city of Baghdad, lived a young Jewish couple with their month-old baby. One Shabbat night after the husband had just left home for the synagogue, the young mother noticed that her baby was breathing with difficulty. She went over to have a look only to discover that the child was burning with fever.

What could she do? It would be another hour till her husband returned home and who knows what could happen till then. But on the other hand, although the nearest doctor was a fifteen-minute walk away, the streets of Baghdad were very dangerous for a young woman alone at night. She was desperate and each second that she helplessly watched her baby suffer made her more so.

Finally she made her decision, she ran to the closet, took out a dark coat, wrapped it around herself, said a prayer to G-d and rushed out

into the street. She had to make it to the doctor's home. But after several minutes she heard footsteps behind her, someone was following! She quickened her step but the so did footsteps and suddenly a large sack descended over her head she was lifted in the air, tumbling over, and she fainted.

When she awoke, she was laying on a fine woven carpet and a perfumed smell filled the room. Gradually she began to understand that she was in the palace of the Sultan himself.

The Sultan was sitting on his throne, and she gradually stood up to face him, "Please excuse the crude way you were brought here." He said graciously.

"You see I have been searching for a new wife to add to my harem, but, AHH, such a beautiful one! And a Jewess at that! Ahh, I am very fortunate! And so are you! You will be my main wife! Yes! Just look around you! All that is here, and more, will be yours! Power! Luxury! The finest silks, jewels, pleasures, servants, all at your command."

"I am sorry your royal highness," she almost interrupted, "But, I want to go home! It is forbidden for me to marry, First, I'm already married but I am a Jew, and I always will be a Jew. I will never marry a non-Jew!"

"Ahhh, Very good! Excellent!" Exclaimed the Sultan "I thought you would tell me that you don't like how I look, Ha Ha! This would be difficult to change. But such a simple thing as your husband or your religion! Ha Ha! That is nothing! We will tell your husband you are dead. And as for religion. Ha ha!!! Why here is heaven on earth!!! Believe me after a short while here you will forget your religion and your husband as well. All that will be like a dream!!! Religion never stood in the way of love!"

"I would rather die than marry a non-Jew," she said firmly. "And the fact is that even if I wasn't married I would never marry a non-Jew ….. not even a great ruler as yourself. Our religion forbids it." She

was shaking and scared, but she had enough sense to try not to arouse the Sultan's wrath on her people.

The Sultan thought for a minute, then turned to his guards and calmly but firmly said "Put her in the tower till she changes her mind!!" Then turning to her with a kind look in his eye added, "I hope you change your mind……for both of our sakes."

She was led out the palace doors to a high tower built at the edge of the wall surrounding the palace. Then she was led up winding stairs, into a small room lined with fine carpets and the door was locked behind her leaving her alone.

"A rather luxurious jail" she thought to herself as she looked around at the carpets, and the small window about twenty feet up the wall. She knew that if she wanted to escape she had to work fast while it was still night and while she still had some strength.

She rolled up three carpets and stood them on their ends under the window. Then she rolled up some smaller carpets and used them as a ladder to begin her climb to the top of the higher carpets until she was able to stand there, grab the corner of the window and lift herself to peek out. The window was bigger than she thought but looking down she almost lost her breath.

It was a three-story drop! But on the other hand, there were some bushes there, and maybe G-d would do a miracle, and in any case she really had no choice. She went back down, took one of the smaller carpets, pushed it up to the top and then into the window, thinking that maybe it would cushion her fall, managed to get inside, whispered 'SHMA YISROEL', grabbed onto the carpet and inclined her weight and .. She was falling!!!.

In an instant she hit the bushes with a terrible thud, a few seconds later she was terribly confused but .. She crawled out of the carpet into the night. Was she dreaming? No… she was alive!!!

It was nothing short of a miracle! The carpet and the bushes had broken her fall! Without thinking too much, she grabbed the carpet so as not to leave any evidence and began to run home.

Meanwhile, an hour or so earlier, her husband had arrived, found the feverish baby alone in the house and brought the doctor who lowered the fever. But where was his wife? He waited for several hours, even asked the Arab neighbors but no clue. Unable to rest he decided to take a walk to calm himself down.

After a few minutes he reached the river, which was not far from his house, and began pacing back and forth. Where could his wife be? Suddenly he noticed that there was someone else there who was also deep in worried thought, pacing back and forth.

Why, it was none other than the Sultan himself! When the Sultan passed him by he looked up at the Jew and said, "Ahhh! It's your G-d that punished me, what terrible luck!!! What a curse!!! Ahhh!"

"What happened, your majesty?" asked the Jew momentarily forgetting his own problems.

"I tried to steal a Jewish girl, but she ran away and stole my carpet!! OOOH MY CARPET!!!"

"But, I don't understand, your majesty must have thousands of carpets?!" asked the Jew incredulously.

"Yes," the sultan answered almost crying, "But this carpet had all of my prize Jewels sewed into it!! OOOH!!"

Needless to say when our hero arrived home and found his wife sleeping soundly on the couch, a strange carpet thrown in the corner, he understood the entire story.

A year later they were living in a great mansion far from Baghdad and donating huge amounts of money to charity.

The point of the story is that sometimes the biggest blessings come from what seems to be curses. Like it said in last week's Torah

section (23:6) That G-d changed the curses of Bilam, the biggest anti-Semite in history, to blessings!

So now we can understand why G-d wrote so many curses in this week's Torah portion; so that there will be that many more blessings when He transforms them from bad to good.

In fact that is one of the main jobs of the Moshiach, and the reason that Jews have impatiently awaited his arrival for almost two thousand years; he will transform all the misfortunes and the difficulties in the world to blessings. Wishing all our readers a good, healthy, happy, sweet New Year, together and may HaShem transform the entire world to one big blessing with the coming of Moshiach.

The Farmer's Great Gratitude to Hashem By Rabbi Reven Semah

וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ **"*Then you will call out and say*."** (Debarim 26:5)

A farmer is required to bring Bikurim, the first ripened fruits of the seven species for which the land of Israel is praised, to the Bet Hamikdash. There he presents his fruits as a sign of gratitude to Hashem for the success of his crop. The Torah writes that he must thank Hashem in a raised voice. Why is this necessary?

Rabbi Ozer explains with the following story. In Israel is a place called Amuka, the burial place of the great Rabbi Yonatan ben Uziel. People come there to pray for a marriage partner. This place is famous because the success rate is very great. One day a married woman came and prayed with great happiness.

Usually one sees people pouring out their hearts with tears, but this woman was praying with great joy. When approached, she explained that she came here previously to pray to Hashem with a loud voice and crying. Hashem answered her prayers, and she met her husband

whom she is married to now. She felt that if she came here to cry out from pain, it was only appropriate to return here to joyfully express her gratitude.

A farmer plants his crop, knowing that the success of his crop is dependent on Hashem. If Hashem brings enough rain he will succeed. All that time he cries out to Hashem with a loud voice that Hashem should bring the rain.

Now that the crop was a success, it's time to thank Hashem.

One might incorrectly assume that mumbling a quick "thank you" under his breath is enough to fulfill this obligation. The Torah, therefore, teaches us that in expressing appreciation, lip service is insufficient. The thanks must be given with the same intensity as the tearful requests. Just like the farmer screamed out to Hashem to bless him with a bountiful harvest, so too must he call out his thanks to Hashem.

So many times, we cry out to Hashem. When we get answered, cry out our thanks.

Amen – From Lower to Upper

והיית רק למעלה ולא תהיה למטה כי תשמע אל מצות ה' אלקיך אשר אנכי מצוך היום לשמר ולעשות (כחי ג)

The Ben Ish Chai explained: The difference between the numerical value of 175- **מעלה** and the value of **מטה** -84 is 91, which is the numerical value of the combination of the Names of Hashem, Hav-ayah and Ad-nus, which come together when answering amen – which is also equivalent to 91. That is why it is so important (Baal Haturim Devarim 24 2). The passuk alludes that one who fulfils the "mitzvos Hashem Elokecha" with the kavanah of being meyached the two Names of Hashem merits that his level will rise from matah – below to ma'alah – higher.

Hashem Save the Queen

In this week's portion Ki-Savo Hashem tells us "if you observe the commandments of Hashem, your G-d, and you go in His ways. Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed upon you, and they will honor you." (Devorim 28:9-10) The verse teaches us that when we Jews act according to the Torah, the nations will recognize that we are a holy people.

The following amazing true story shows how we Jews can be "a light unto the nations."



In 1908, Queen Wilhelmina of Holland went for a brief vacation to the popular resort area of Marienbad, Austria, near the German border. Since this was not an official state visit, she only had a small entourage of people with her, and there was no welcoming ceremony on her arrival at the train station in Marienbad.

As the Queen got off the train, she noticed a large crowd on the platform. Obviously, a prominent personality had just arrived. Everyone was gathered around trying to get a glimpse of the famous person.

Queen Wilhelmina asked and was told that a great Jewish personality, **the Munkaczer Rebbe, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Spira** (1845-1914) had just arrived. Many of the Rebbe's chassidim had come to greet him at the train station.

The Queen then asked what a Rebbe is. She was told that a Rebbe is a very holy man of great wisdom who gives blessings and advice to his many followers. Thousands seek his counsel and ask the Rebbe to

pray on their behalf. Often the Rebbe's prayers are answered and those who seek his blessings live to see their wishes fulfilled.

When the Queen heard that the Rebbe had spiritual power, she immediately thought of her own situation. The Queen and her husband Prince Hendrik were childless. Both she and her husband were concerned that the Dutch monarchy should continue in their family. Without children, the royal line would end with Queen Wilhelmina.

The Queen and her entourage left the train station. Later that day, the Queen asked one of her attendants to try to arrange for her to meet the great Rebbe privately. The next evening, the Munkaczer Rebbe was brought to a secluded area of a beautiful park just outside of the city. Queen Wilhelmina was accompanied by two attendants and the Rebbe came with two bochurim.

As the Rebbe and the Queen sat down, the Queen sensed that the man sitting opposite her was a personality of great stature. She spoke candidly to the Rebbe about how sad she was about being childless.

The Rebbe listened attentively and told the Queen not to worry. Her monarchy would continue. As the Queen was about to depart, the Rebbe cited a verse from the Torah saying that the Queen's kingdom will not be severed "until Shilo comes."(Genesis 49:10) Meaning, the Queen will have descendants until the coming of the Moshiach.

The next year, in 1909, the Queen had a little girl and named her Juliana. It was the only child that the Royal couple ever had. (Thirty-nine years later, in 1948, Juliana became Queen of Holland. Her daughter, Beatrix is presently the Queen of Holland.)

A little more than 30 years after the Munkaczer Rebbe had given Queen Wilhelmina a blessing for a child, a black cloud descended over Europe. World War II had begun. The Germans sought out Jews in every country where they could find them.

Rabbi Yakov Tzvi Katz was one poor Jew who was caught in the German net. During the War, Rabbi Katz was sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Rabbi Katz's 18 year old son Shmuel was deported from the ghetto and never heard from again. 12 volumes of Rabbi Katz's writings on halacha were burned.

After the war was over Rabbi Katz returned to his native Hungary, in an attempt to put his life back together. He quickly saw that there was no future for the Jews in post-war Hungary. Many Jews at the time were trying to emigrate to Holland. Rabbi Katz tried, but he was denied entry into Holland twice. Holland was only accepting those Jews who had professions which would benefit the country. There were already plenty of rabbis in Holland.

One day, Rabbi Katz decided to write a letter directly to Queen Wilhelmina. He explained the hardships he and his family had experienced in the war. He then wrote, "Surely Your Highness remembers the very momentous meeting that preserved the course of royalty in Holland."

He detailed the Queen's encounter with the Munkaczer Rebbe in Marienbad, almost 40 years previous. Rabbi Katz continued writing in his letter to the Queen that the Rebbe had insisted that two boys come along with him for the meeting with the Queen.

The Rebbe would need an interpreter since the Queen would be speaking German. Rabbi Katz wrote, "I was that 18-year-old boy who accompanied the Rebbe, and it was I who transmitted to the Queen the wonderful news from the saintly Rabbi that the Queen would bear a child within a year."

The letter which Rabbi Katz had sent to the Queen was written in Yiddish. Although Rabbi Katz could have written the letter in German, he was concerned that one of the Queen's attendants would intercept the letter, read it, and then prevent it from getting to the Queen. Therefore, when the letter in Yiddish arrived, and old Russian chazan named Rabinowitz was summoned from his synagogue

in The Hague and asked to translate the letter. The chazan read the letter. Realizing its significance, the chazan translated the letter with all the emotion he could manage. The translated text was brought to Queen Wilhelmina.

After reading the note, the Queen saw to it that Rabbi Katz be granted immigration papers swiftly. Then he was able to rebuild his life which had been largely destroyed. (from: Echoes of the Maggid, R. Pesach J. Krohn p.95-99)

We see from this amazing story the power of a Jew to make a good impression on the nations. As the verse tells us, "If you observe the commandments of Hashem, your G-d, and you go in His ways. Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed upon you, and they will honor you." (Deuteronomy 28:9-10) When a Jew acts according to the Torah, he shines with the holiness of Hashem.

The Munkaczer Rebbe and Rabbi Yakov Tzvi Katz showed the nations the beauty of a Torah observant lifestyle. Let us all learn from their examples and then we will truly be a light unto the nations. As the Prophet tells us, "...I will strengthen your hand; I will protect you; I will set you for a covenant to the people, for a light unto the nations..." (Yishayahu 42:6).

"The moment that we realize that everything comes from Hashem, we are relieved of the burden of worry and anxiety." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

"Tefillah is not recited to inform Hashem of our needs. It is to remind us that everything we have comes only from Him." ~ Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.



In our generation, the quality of Emes was personified by **Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky**. However, Reb Yaakov's passion for speaking the truth did not conflict with his unusual concern for the feelings of others. If he was unable to come to the phone, he would never allow someone to tell the caller that he was not home which would be a clear falsehood. At the same time, he would not permit the person to say, "He is busy now, please call back later." This might cause the caller to feel that Reb Yaakov had more important things to do then to talk to him and cause the caller to feel a sense of rejection.

Instead, Reb Yaakov always tried to take the call personally, to explain that he was unable to talk at that time. In situations where that was impossible, he would ask whoever answered the phone to say that the Rosh Yeshiva would be home at a certain hour without any reference as to whether he was currently home.

In this way, no falsehood was said, and no feelings were hurt.

Short Story of the Week with Rabbi Mordechai Levin

The Ponovezher Rav, ZT"L, used to regale the bochurim in his yeshiva with anecdotes about his great rebbe, the **Chofetz Chaim, ZT"L**. He once told them about how one time, Eliyahu Hanavi came to visit the Chofetz Chaim!

The story went as follows: One day, the Ponovezher Rav came to ask his rebbe a question. As he was waiting his turn alongside others in the waiting room, the door to the study opened. Out walked a distinguished-looking older man that he didn't recognize.

As he entered the study, he asked the Chofetz Chaim who that older man was. The Chofetz Chaim looked up in wonder and said, "What, you saw him?"

The Rov affirmed that he had seen the man. The Chofetz Chaim exclaimed that "Ashrei Mi" (lucky is the one) who sees Eliyahu Hanavi." Subsequently, the Ponovezher Rav went into the waiting room and asked those sitting there if they had seen an older man exit the study. No one had seen any such person!

The Ponovezher Rav used to repeat the story to point out the greatness of the Chofetz Chaim…without realizing that the story also reflected upon his own spiritual superiority.

Comment: In the days of Elul, as we approach Rosh Hashana and the Day of Judgement for all mankind, every thinking person focuses on bettering himself.

Realizing that people who lived within the past few centuries reached superior levels of kedusha and greatness, to a point where they were able to enjoy visitors from Heaven, can serve for all of us as an impetus towards spiritual growth. Let us push ourselves to elevate ourselves towards attainable greatness.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Sufficient Sleep



It is related that the **Chozeh of Lublin** would instruct his students not to sleep too little. **R' Yitzchak Isaac of Kamarna** would say that it is better to add an hour of sleep and the rest of the day be a *mentch* than to limit your sleep by an hour and the rest of the day be a *chaya ra'ah*.

What would the **Chofetz Chaim** do to ensure that his students get an adequate amount of sleep? He himself, occasionally, would actually close all the lights in his yeshiva late at night to make certain that his students get sufficient sleep.

The gemara (Megila 32a) says that the one who rolls the Sefer Torah (**הגולל ספר תורה**) together to close it (known as *gelilah*) receives a reward equal to the reward of all the other participants.

R' Yaakov of Pshevorsk was once asked to explain this enigmatic statement. Because someone rolled the Sefer Torah he receives so much more reward?

There can be a person that wants to continue learning until the wee hours. However, if he does this, how will his next day look? **הגולל ספר תורה** means that one is wise enough to close the sefer when it is time for sleep. This is so that the next day he will wake up with vigour, with a clear mind and serve Hashem with freshness and passion. For such a person it is fitting that he receive such reward.



Challos

The tzaddik from Yerushalayim, **Reb Zelig Braverman *zt'l***, made a *kabbalah* with his Rebbetzin to bake and distribute *challos* for free on *erev Shabbos* to the poor of Yerushalayim.

Once, a very poor person came to his door late on Friday afternoon and asked for two *challos*. Reb Zelig replied, "I'm so sorry, but many people came today for *challos*. Nothing is left."

The man got very upset, and smacked Reb Zelig twice across his face. Reb Zelig immediately took the two *challos* that were on his table for his Shabbos meal and gave them to the poor man.

When the poor man left the house, the family asked, "Why did you give away our *challos*? We need them for the *seudah*. And does he deserve to get anything after he slapped you?"

Reb Zelig explained that if this poor man slapped him, he probably needs the *challos* desperately. Reb Zelig understood that the poor

man's wife would be angry if he came home without *challos*, and there would be a serious *shalom bayis* problem in their home.

"As for us," Reb Zelig added, "we can manage this week with some matzos." Then, Reb Zelig closed himself in his room, and from outside the door, he was heard saying, ***"Zelig, why did you need to be slapped twice before you learned that you must give away from your own to others?"***

The lesson is that we must have other people's needs in mind.

Rav Avigdor Miller on Big Small Achievements



QUESTION: What should a person do if he wants to become great, but he realizes that he lacks the motivation to accomplish it to the fullest extent that he desires?

ANSWER: Look. Here's a man who would like to become a millionaire. He's walking in the street, and he sees a measly twenty-dollar bill lying in the gutter. Now, twenty dollars won't make him a millionaire, but will he pass by? No. Even a millionaire will stoop down and pick it up.

And the answer is, every little bit is valuable. If you're able to control your character at least one little bit, a little *tikkun*, that's already valuable. If you keep quiet a little bit – if instead of talking a thousand words a day, you'll talk 999 words, it's already a big achievement.

And therefore, it's only because people don't realize how great is the achievement in ruchniyus, they don't realize that when it comes to the spiritual achievements of improving your character even the

smallest amount is worth doing, that's why people don't grab the opportunities.

And therefore nobody should disdain that; just because he cannot become a *tzaddik* like Moshe Rabbeinu doesn't mean he shouldn't bend over and pick up the twenty dollar bill anyhow.

Etz Hachaim – R' CT Blau - What Are You Doing?



The Ponovitch Rov, Harav Yosef Shlomo Kahanemen זצוק״ל built Yeshivas Ponovitch in a time of complete waste land and emptiness in Eretz Yisroel. It is known that people thought that he was simply dreaming, to the extent that they even called the Ponivitch Rov "Yosef Ba'al Hachalomos".

The Ponovitch Rov had plans to build a **בית מדרש** that could seat 1,000 bochurim during a time when the amount of **לימוד התורה** and Yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel was very minimal. But nothing and nobody would stand in his way, and nothing would deter the Ponovitch Rov.

He had a mission, and although **על פי דרך הטבע** it appeared to be impossible, the desire and passion to rebuild Torah on the shores of **ארץ ישראל** was super vital to him. The question is, where did these unbelievable **כוחות** stem from? Where did he have the courage to go completely against the tide? What was it that burned within him to upkeep the Torah in the world without compromise?

One time the Ponovitch Rov himself revealed the big secret. "When I was a young child, I lived with my two brothers, together with my

mother who was an **אלמנה**. Our mother was as poor as one could possibly imagine. The winter clothing that we owned was extremely minimal, we owned one coat, one scarf and one pair of boots, and that was all.

When the bitter-cold Russian winter set in, the coldness was brutal, reaching temperatures below zero degrees. Our mother was completely absolved from any obligation of having to send us to learn in cheder based on her life situation. Nobody would have any *teinas* on her, (not in this world, and not even in the Next World).

One would assume that she would have no choice but to leave us all at home during the freezing cold winter months. But oh no! Not my mother! She understood with simplicity, that every day that her children were at home and not learning Torah, they were lacking nourishment for their souls and they were being deprived of all future greatness in Torah. She was unwilling to have a hand in neglecting her precious children this opportunity. What did she do? What could have been her solution?

Every morning, she would wake up at 5 a.m. wake up the oldest son, garb him in the one set of winter clothing that we had, pick up the child and hold him in her arms. She would then walk outside into the unbearable cold. (My mother herself was clothed in the only thin garment she owned, plus her tattered shoes that she wore.) Then my mother, would walk twenty minutes in the ice cold holding onto her precious child.

When she arrived at the Rebbe's home, she would remove the winter clothing from the child, walk home, and repeat the same routine with the next two children. Whenever our neighbours would see the way my mother walked outside, every morning, in the freezing cold, with her thin clothing, they would yell at her, "What are you doing! Have you gone crazy!? Do you want your children to become **יתומים** from their mother as well?"

However, my mother paid no attention to their screams, she was not willing to be **מוותר** on her children's learning of Torah. She was tough as nails and would not budge."

The Ponivitch Rov concluded "It was my mother who gave me the **כח** to build a Yeshiva - to us children she never said a word, however, we saw her courage and bravery, and this was embedded into the deepest place of our souls. She taught us that there is no concept of it being "Too hard to learn Torah".

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

Chizuk – Inspiration



Rav Yisroel Salanter, the founder of the Mussar movement gave Shiurim in Yeshivas throughout Russia. At the start of the Mussar movement, there were those that erroneously thought that Mussar was only for those who could not handle the depth and profundity of deep Talmudic study. Through the deep and profound Talmudic Shiurim that Rav Salanter would give throughout Russia, while at the same time promoting his deep commitment to learning Mussar, he sought to dispel that notion and promote its study.

When a visiting Gadol such as Rav Salanter would come to visit a Yeshiva to give a Shiur, a list was posted on the Yeshiva door of the Mareh Mekomos – sources and commentaries, that would be discussed during the Shiur. Often, the list would include twenty or more Mareh Mekomos from the Talmud, the Rishonim and the Achronim.

In one town, after the list of Mareh Mekomos was posted for Rav Salanter's Shiur, a prankster decided to completely change the list. The list now included unrelated, random sources and commentaries.

When Rav Salanter was about to give his Shiur, he looked at the list of posted Mareh Mekomos and realized what had happened. With little time to spare before his Shiur was to begin, Rav Salanter took ten minutes to rework his Shiur.

Due to his great scholarship and brilliance, Rav Salanter was able to effortlessly link the seemingly random Mareh Mekomos and proceeded to deliver a Masterful Talmudic lecture.



His prime student, **Rav Yitzchok Blazer**, writes in his Sefer, the Kochvei Ohr, that Rav Salanter did not actually use the full ten minutes he had to formulate his reworked Talmudic Shiur. Rav Salanter's lightning-fast mind, coupled with his mastery of the entire Talmud, enabled him to reformulate his Shiur in two minutes. He used the remaining eight minutes to be honest with himself and to examine and work on his motivations. He wanted to make sure that when giving his masterful reworked Shiur, that he was motivated by only the truest and most proper of intentions - to promote the study of Mussar and not to show off his Talmudic skills.

He worked on himself for those remaining eight minutes to ensure that it was not the Yetzer Hara motivating him to show off, but rather a true and deep desire to promote the study of Mussar.

Rabbi YY Jacobson - The Boy Who Jumped onto The Carriage of King George VI



This story, set in the darkest times, illustrates the power of breaking free from the crowd and chasing the moment.

Just prior to WW11 Great Britain opened its borders to allow many thousands of children who were living in Nazi occupied countries to Britain as a safe haven. This was known as the Kindertransport. This started in 1938 just after Kristallnacht. Over the next year, close to 10,000 children made their way to Britain, and many of them were the sole survivors of their families.

Beryl Gartner was one of these kids. He was put in an orphanage with other refugees but would not stop crying. He was weeping day and night. He missed his parents. Nothing would help. He was only 11 years old, and he was devastated.

One day the teacher entered in a state of excitement and proclaimed that King George VI [1936-1952] was coming to their village. When Beryl heard this, he calmed down and stopped crying. All the children were ordered to their room to put on their best shorts and scrub their faces and knees in preparation for their meeting with the king.



Along with all the other residents of the street, the school children turned out on the pavement and there was a great sense of anticipation. However, as the other spectators were aware, the 'meeting with the king' was not quite as the children had imagined. Instead, they were merely part of the welcoming party as the king's fancy carriage turned the corner and proceeded down the street.

Nonetheless the children joined in the cheering and flag waving as the car passed them at a processional pace. However, for Beryl, simply watching was not enough and he broke ranks and proceeded to chase the car down the road. When he reached the vehicle which was still at processional pace, he began banging on the boot with all his might, when finally the car stopped and lo and behold the door opened and the boy stood face to face with the king.

King George asked, "What's the problem, what do you want?"

The boy burst out crying and explained that he had been told he would meet the king and very much wanted to thank him for having brought him to this country and rescued him from Europe. "However,", continued the boy, "you see, I'm terribly lonely as my parents are still over there, and I am afraid that they are going to die. Please can you bring my parents over here so that we can be together."

The king responded with compassion, and said, "I would love to, but we are now at war with Germany, and I can't bring your parent's here."

The boy looked at him and said with all sincerity, "But you are the king of England, you can do anything!"

The King said, "I will see what I can do." And then asked for the boy's name, the name of his parents and where he was from. He thanked him and bid him on his way back to the rest of the children.

The boy was sure he would be severely punished for his actions but surprisingly the school did not make anything of the incident. Until a few weeks later the headmaster summoned the boy to his office, to which the boy was sure he was to be reprimanded. The headmaster wished to talk to him about the incident that had taken place but instead of punishment he explained that the boy had made quite an impression upon the king. So much so in fact that King George had sent a gift.

With that the headmaster opened the side door to the office and standing there waiting were the boy's parents! Beryl was reunited with his mammy and his tatty.

There was another boy in the crowd that day, and for the past 60 years he has asked himself, "why did I just stand there watching like everyone else? Why did I not seize the moment and chase the king? Maybe if I had I might have seen my parents again and not lost them to the Nazis Y. Shemom..."

The Baal Hatanya, The Alter Rebbe – Rabbi Shniur Zalman of Liadi teaches us that the days and weeks before Rosh Hashana that the King (Hashem) is not in His palace. He is in the fields, farms and villages. He goes out to make Himself accessible to us – His subjects.

At times like this, we often just stand behind barricades. We feel that we can't meet with The King. We feel barricades in our hearts, there is a blockage, we can't approach Hashem as we are too distant.

I say to you, "Dear children of Hashem, break through the barricades and get close to Hashem. There may be barriers and bodyguards but jump through them and ask of Hashem whatever you want. Remember, that Hashem's love for you, is absolutely limitless."

We say **ובכן** four times in Shemona Esrei. The fourth one comes from Megillas Esther - **וּבְכֵן אָבֹוא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כַדָּת - *Then I will go to the king contrary to the law.***

Sometimes, you must go to The King, even if you are not called. Just jump through the barricades like Esther HaMalka.

Pearls of Wisdom … A Word for the Ages



A resident of Tzefas once approached **Rav Shmuel Eliyahu, Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's** son and the chief Rav of Tzefas, with a story about his father, Rav Mordechai.

This young man had been in Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's Shiur and learned Torah from him. Once, this young man said that he did something so out of place, that he deserved a severe punishment.

Rav Eliyahu called him over, rebuked him, and even raised his hand, and he gave him something between a light slap and a caress. With his other hand, Rav Eliyahu presented him with a candy. He said, "Take this and make a Brachah."

The young man told Rav Shmuel, "I have received more than a few reprimands and smacks in my life, but I never received a rebuke that affected me like the one I had gotten from Rav Eliyahu. He knew how to admonish with such love and care, that it touched the deepest, most inner part of my being. It affected me in a way no other reprimand ever did, and it helped me change my life!"



Worries





A granddaughter of the **Birkas Avraham zt'l of Slonim** sighed and said "Oy" when she was experiencing a difficult time. Her grandfather told her to say, "Oy du" (you, in Yiddish). Together, Oydeh is **אודה** to praise Hashem because when you know that your hardships come from Hashem, you will praise Hashem.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt'l told of a segulah to be saved from all worries. One should write on a paper all the kindness that Hakadosh Baruch Hu did for him, and when he says Modim in Shemonah Esrei, he should remember all those points, and he should thank Hashem for them.

Reb Shlomo Zalman said that this is **בדוק ומנוסה**, a proven and true segulah to free a person from all worries.

"Circumstances don't determine whether a person will be happy, but rather how one reacts to the circumstances."
~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Knock Knock



Reb Shalom Shwadron zt'l said: When somebody knocks on your door, you can decide whether you want to answer the door or not. But when you hear someone pounding on the door, you understand that the person is desperate, so you go to see who's at the door and what he wants. You might find a poor person there who says, "I need food now, or I'll die from hunger."

Reb Shalom Shwardon said this is the reason we say, **דלתיך דפקנו רחום וחנון נא אל תשיבנו ריקם מלפניך** ***-"We pound on Your door, O' compassionate One. Don't have us leave empty handed."***

We aren't merely knocking on Hashem's door (**נוקש**). We are banging and pounding on Hashem's door (**דפקנו**), desperately begging that he bless us with salvations and a good year.

The parashah begins with the mitzvah of *bikurim*. The purpose of this precious mitzvah is to help us remember that our parnassah comes from Hashem. We bring the first fruits to the Beis HaMikdash to show our gratitude to Hashem because we acknowledge that we didn't earn this on our own. We recognize that our livelihood is a gift from Hashem.

When one recognizes that everything he has comes from Hashem, Hashem's blessings will remain with him.

The Beis Yisrael says the mitzvah of bikurim is written towards the end of the Torah to tell us that even if a person transgressed the entire Torah, he can begin his avodas Hashem now. Just as the new fruits become a mitzvah, his avodas Hashem can begin anew, now.

Reb Yoel Rotenstien on The Parsha

ושמת בטנא פרק כו פסוק ב רבי אהרן בקשט

"…and you shall put it in a basket…"



It's brought down in the gemara (*Bikkurim, Yerushalmi*) that the rich people, who brought their *bikkurim* in baskets of gold, would get back their baskets; the poor, who brought their *bikkurim* in baskets of straw, would not get back their baskets.

Question: Why did the rich get back their golden baskets while the poor did not get back their straw baskets?

Answer: The wealthy people's fruits were from the best of the best. Since they did not need baskets in the *Beis HaMikdash*, they gave them back. The poor people's fruits were few and of poor quality. Were they to be taken out of the baskets, the donor would be embarrassed.

Rav Yaakov Neiman gives another reason.

When a rich person brings his *bikkurim* in an attractive golden basket, his heart fills with pride. Therefore, we tell him to take his haughtiness back; we don't need his gold and silver. This is done to clearly demonstrate that Hashem hates arrogance. However, the poor man who brings his fruit in a straw basket comes with humility, and therefore his baskets are beloved by Hashem.

Torah Compilations with Yossi

In Parshat Ki Tavo, we are told how a farmer would bring his bikkurim, his first fruits, to the Temple. There he would make a declaration: " **ועתה הנה הבאתי**," he would say, ***"And now, behold, I have brought these first fruits."***



The Midrash points out that these three words all appear to be redundant. **•ועתה** - and now – well obviously it was then. **•הנה** - behold – well yes of course! **•הבאתי** - I have brought – well who else has brought?

The Midrash explains that there were three ways in which the farmers would enhance this mitzvah, and we learn them from these words.

•ועתה –and now – according to the Midrash means immediately – **מיד**

•הנה -behold – means **בשמחה** –with joy.

•הבאתי –I have brought – means **משלי** –from my own.

So, first of all, this was a mitzvah which was performed immediately. It was never put off. Secondly, it was carried out **בשמחה** ,with a lot of joy and enthusiasm. And thirdly, it was brought **משלי** ,that is to say, the farmer would give it his all, showing that really he wanted to perform this precept.

I believe that what applied then to the bringing of bikkurim should apply to the performance of all the mitzvot that we carry out.

First of all, **מיד** – let's not put off an opportunity to perform a good deed. Let's do it right now, and then tomorrow we'll have an opportunity to perform others.

Secondly, let's perform good deeds **בשמחה** ,with joy and enthusiasm, always thanking Hashem for the privilege of being able to enhance our lives and the lives of others through carrying out the mitzvot.

And thirdly it needs to be **משלי**, not because somebody's imposing this upon me, but actually I'm giving it my all.

And if we carry out our mitzvot in these three ways, we can enhance all of the mitzvot that we perform immeasurably. So let's grasp this opportunity to pray with joy with all our hearts, for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, loving and sweet Shabbat.

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

ועניתָ ואמרתָ לפני ד' אלקיך Then you shall call out and say before Hashem, your G-d. (26:5)

Bikkurim, offering the first fruits to the *Kohen*,symbolises the Jew dedicating everything in his possession to Hashem.

Why is it necessary to make a verbal declaration? As long as the bringer of the fruits has a sense of gratitude in his mind, should it not suffice?

The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that, by articulating his gratitude, "a man arouses his thoughts and draws out the truth in his heart with the power of the words of his mouth." In other words, one must express his gratitude in order for others to perceive his appreciation. By reiterating the many kindnesses that we benefit from Hashem, we develop and nurture a stronger sense of recognition that Hashem is the Source of all the good in our lives.



Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita relates the story of a righteous Jew who took it upon himself to keep a "keepsake" with him at all times to remind him of a challenge that he had encountered in the past that, *baruch Hashem*, was over. He did not want to forget it, because, in order to truly express his gratitude to Hashem, he required a reminder of times past.

This man went everywhere with a plastic bottle of mineral water in his hand. He took it to *shul*, to a lecture, to a *simchah*, celebration. Wherever people saw him, he always had his bottle of water with him.

Rav Zilberstein asked this man why he did this "strange" thing. People do not usually walk around with a bottle of water.

The man explained, "A number of years ago, it was discovered that Israeli water had become contaminated. We were told not to drink tap water; it was unhealthy. As a result, people were compelled to purchase their drinking water in the *makolet*, grocery store, or wherever water was sold. The price of bottled water skyrocketed. Members of the community who were of little means had nothing to drink. Others spent a small fortune stockpiling water in their homes.

The vendors who had earlier warehoused the water were having a field day with the inflated prices. I remember going to the store and paying 150 *shekel* for a bottle of water!

Baruch Hashem, the problem was resolved, and prices returned to normal. During this short period, the true character of people became evident. Some merchants jumped at the opportunity to fleece their customers. It was supply and demand. They had the supply, and the customer needed the water. Others were decent and

caring, knowing that making a profit from the misfortune of others was uncharacteristic of the Jewish people.

"I was able to purchase water. The nadir to which some people plummeted, however, troubled me. I asked myself, 'Is this the price that we must pay for a bottle of water? Is a bottle of water worth debasing one's *tzelem Elokim*, Divine Image, in which he was created?

Now that water is readily available, I carry a bottle of water with me everywhere that I go, so that I never forget the kindness of Hashem.

We take so much for granted until, one day, it is suddenly taken away from us."

King Charles III Was Circumcised by Jewish Mohel, Cherishes UK Jews By David Israel

When Philip Arthur George, the first child of Princess Elizabeth and Philip Mountbatten, was born, on November 14, 1948, his mother hired Rabbi Jacob Snowman, a well-known London physician and mohel in December 1948 to circumcise her son.

Snowman circumcised other members of the British nobility and Royal Family, and the princess was reportedly highly satisfied with the Rabbi's work. The royal family tradition of hiring Jewish mohels to circumcise their sons goes back to Queen Victoria. However, it was reported that this fine tradition was interrupted in 1982 after the birth of Prince William, because his mother Diana, the Princess of Wales, did not approve.

Rabbi Snowman's brother, Emanuel Snowman, married into the Wartski family of jewellers and for generations provided the royals with jewelry, including the Welsh gold wedding bands for Charles and the former Camilla Parker-Bowles, and the bands worn by Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and the former Kate Middleton.

Prince Charles became King Charles III the moment his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, passed away on Thursday, September 8. There will be a coronation in a few weeks, but its purpose will only be to ratify his rule – he already has the title and Camilla is already Queen Camilla, which the late Queen specified in her Accession Day message of February 5, 2022.



Meanwhile, the uncircumcised Prince William does not automatically become the Prince of Wales, and it will be up to the new king to give him the title.

King Charles III's grandmother, Princess Alice of Battenberg, who lived in Greece was one of the Righteous Among the Nations. In 1943, the German Army occupied Athens and rounded up the small group of Greek Jews that hadn't been deported to Auschwitz yet. The princess hid the Jewish widow Rachel Cohen and two of her five children, who were hiding from the Gestapo.

Prince Charles, who visited her tomb in Jerusalem in January 2020, said she was a source of "immense pride" for him and the royal family.

The visit to his grandmother's tomb was part of Prince Charles's official visit to Israel.

On December 6, 2019, Prince Charles delivered a speech he titled, ***The special and precious connection between Jewish community and the Crown***, at a reception in Buckingham Palace. He said, among other things: "In every walk of life, in every field of endeavour, our nation could have had no more generous citizens, and no more faithful friends."

He also said:

"The connection between the Crown and our Jewish Community is something special and precious. I say this from a particular and personal perspective because I have grown up being deeply touched by the fact that British synagogues have, for centuries, remembered my family in your weekly prayers. And as you remember my family, so we too remember and celebrate you."

And: "Benjamin Disraeli, of course, the great Prime Minister, although baptized as a child, never denied his Jewish heritage, describing himself to my great-great-great grandmother, Queen Victoria, as: 'The blank page between the Old and the New Testaments!' When taunted by a Member of Parliament, he answered: ***'Yes, I am a Jew, but when the ancestors of The Right Honorable Gentleman were living as savages on an unknown island, mine were priests in the Temple of Solomon!'"***

Rabbi Chaim Flom - Appreciate What You Have

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ ***"And you shall rejoice with all the good that Hashem gave you."*** (Devorim 26:11)



"I can't believe that he asked you for $20 and you just gave it to him. He's a faker. Aren't you upset with yourself?"

"No. But he's really upset that he didn't ask for more!!"

Rav Mordechai Gifter zt"l (and expounded by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin) says that it is human nature to want more than we presently have. Consequently, people aren't always happy when getting good things because they

think that it could have been even better. Therefore, Hashem commands us that we should rejoice 100% with the good that He gives us.

Appreciate what you have, and you'll be happier!!

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה ה' אֱלֹקיךָ מְצַוְּךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה וְאֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְשָׁמַרְתָּ וְעָשִׂיתָ אוֹתָם בְּכָל־לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשֶׁךָ - *"This day Hashem, your G-d, commands you to perform these laws … observe and perform them with all your heart and all your soul." (Devarim 26:16)*

A few days before Moshe died, he told the Jewish People to follow Hashem's laws and perform the mitzvos. Moshe said, "Today, Hashem commands you to perform these laws." (Devarim 26:16)

Many commentaries including **Rashi**, the **Ohr HaChaim** and **Rabbeinu Bachya** ask the obvious question. These laws were given to the Jewish people on Mt. Sinai 40 years earlier! Why, then, is Moshe saying that these laws were given "today"?

Rashi explains that Moshe was saying that the commandments should be considered new ones. They should be beloved as if the Jewish People had only heard them this very day. The Jewish People should not serve Hashem by rote, out of habit. We should serve Hashem with love.

Every day we can feel as if the Torah has just been given. We CAN feel the intense emotions and strong love of Hashem. Mitzvos and Torah learning will take on a new meaning and will be easy to do.

The biggest mistake we can make in life is to forget just how much Hashem loves us.

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport

וְרָאוּ כָּל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה׳ נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ וְיָרְאוּ מִמֶּךָּ 28:10

There was once a gathering in the house of **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik**. While the assembled people waited for his arrival, one of the chassidic attendees related a story involving a dispute between two chassidic Rebbes.

One of the Rebbes, exasperated at his inability to convince the other to agree to his position, remarked, "How can you disagree with me when I own the tefillin of the holy **Baal Shem Tov?**" The second Rebbe, unimpressed, retorted that this proved nothing, as the tefillin were missing a letter from one of Hashem's Divine names, rendering them invalid. At that point, the two Rebbes went to check the tefillin and indeed found them to be missing a letter and invalid. The storyteller concluded by stressing the degree of Divine Inspiration possessed by chassidic Rebbes.



One of the non-chassidic attendees sharply pointed out that the story was far from impressive since it also demonstrated that the illustrious founder of the movement had worn invalid tefillin.

To this challenge, the storyteller replied that the tefillin were completely intact until the time of this episode, at which point one of the letters miraculously disappeared to fulfil the prediction of the Rebbe.

Not to be outdone, the cynical listener pointed out that if that was the case, the Rebbe had transgressed the prohibition (Rashi

Devorim 12:4) against erasing one of Hashem's Divine names. A dispute then broke out regarding whether it is permitted to cause the erasing of Hashem's name through miraculous means.

At this point, Rav Chaim entered the room and was asked for his opinion about the story. He replied that he did not know if the story was accurate, but he did know that it is impossible to miraculously erase one of Hashem's names. If the tefillin were deficient, they had always been so.

He was then asked how the second Rebbe could have known that they were invalid before examining them. Rav Chaim replied that this ability is easily attained, and he already possessed it at the age of six or seven!

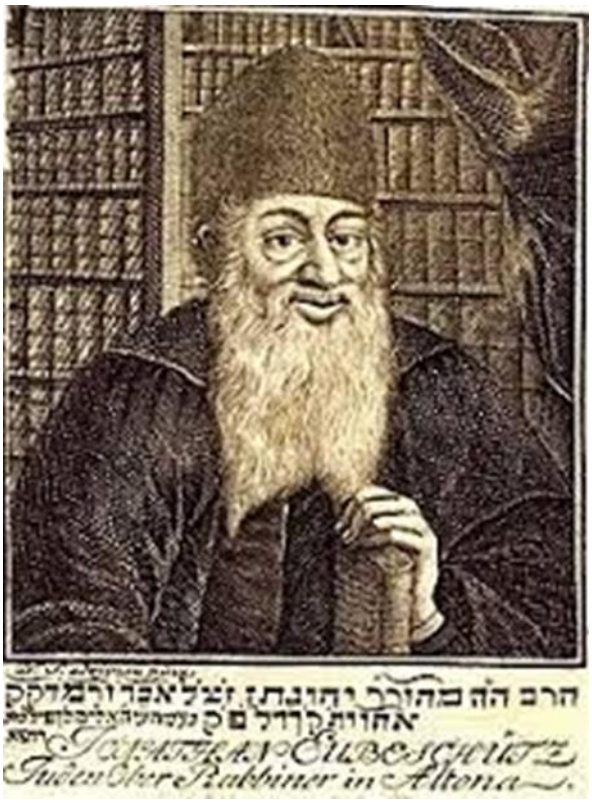
Rav Chaim explained that Moshe blessed the Jewish people that if they act properly and observe the commandments, the nations of the world will see that the name of Hashem is called upon them, and they will fear and revere them. The Gemora in Megillah (16b) understands the concept of the name of Hashem being called upon them as referring to the tefillin, which contain an allusion to one of Hashem's Divine names (Tosefos Berachos 6a), which are worn upon our heads. Therefore, any tefillin that do not inspire the appropriate reverence must clearly be invalid.

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

Hashem commanded Bnei Yisroel to rejoice and bring karbanos on Har Eival. - **Horav Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל** asked that why should Bnei Yisroel rejoice and bring karbanos on Har Eival? Wasn't that the mountain on where the curses were given?

Hashem was teaching Bnei Yisroel that everything that happens to them is for the good, even if it looks like something that is bad. [Dvar Torah from **ספר עלינו לשבח**]

Chazu Bonai - Chizuk From Our Chachomim



כ״א אלול marks the Yohrzeit of **Rav Yonason Eibschutz** **זצ״ל** , one of the **גדולי הדור** in the 18th Century.

Born in the year 1694 in Pinchov, Poland, to Rav Nosson Nota and Shaindel, young Yonason was a child prodigy. He took on his surname when, at the age of 6, his father was appointed as the **רב** in Eibschutz. He was orphaned of both his parents at the age of 13 and grew up in the house of **Rav Meir Eisenstadt** **זצ״ל** , the **פנים מאירות** , becoming a close **תלמיד** of the **תורה** giant.

At the age of 16 he married Rebbetzen Elkele Shapiro, daughter of Rav Moshe Yitzchok who was the **רב** in Bumsla, Bohemia. After living with his in-laws for a few years, Rav Yonason moved to Prague, and became the **ראש ישיבה** and a **דיין** in that most prestigious of **קהילות** in Europe at the young age of 20.

Whilst living in Prague, the Church censored every **ספר** that was owned by Jews and they banned all copies of **גמרות** . Rav Yonason published the Prague Shas, which he had to heavily censor to meet the approval of the authorities but which was the only Shas that was permitted in Prague at that time.

In 1741, soon after the outbreak of the War of Austrian Succession, Rav Yonason was forced to flee Prague and he succeeded the **פני יהושע** as the **רב** of Metz, France.

During his time in Metz, he wrote many **ספרים** including his famous **כרתי ופלתי** and also opened a **ישיבה** where he gave 2 weekly **שיעורים** which would last 7 hours each!

In 1750, he was appointed as **רב** in the famous **קהילה** of Hamburg and Altona. A tough period followed when he was accused of being a Sabbatian but he carried on faithfully leading his **קהילה** and set up a Kloiz despite being offered other jobs such as the **רבנות** of Nikolsburg.

He was **נפטר** in 1764 and is buried in Altona. Most of his **ספרים** were published after his **פטירה** including the **יערות דבש** and the **אורים ותומים**.

יהי זכרו ברוך

Short Story of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

The son-in-law of the **Noda Biyehuda** was a great Talmid Chacham, the Rav of Pozna in Poland, and known as Rav Yosef Hatzaddik. The great **Rav Akiva Eiger, ZT"L**, sent him many scholarly letters, but he didn't always answer them.

One time when they met, the elder Rav Yosef treated a younger Rav Akiva Eiger with great respect. Rav Akiva Eiger seized the opportunity to ask why Rav Yosef did not always reply to his letters. Rav Yosef answered with a prophecy, "When you will become Rav of Pozna you will understand how hard it is to answer letters, due to the rabbinic obligations of such a large community." So, it was. Rav Akiva Eiger eventually became the Rov of Pozna, and subsequently remarked that "the words left the mouth of Rav Yosef, and thus I eventually became the Rav."

It was famously said about Rav Yosef of Pozna that when there were community meetings in his home, his wife would routinely interrupt and loudly berate her saintly husband. People therefore mistakenly considered her a wicked wife.

At Rav Yosef's funeral, his wife stepped up to his casket in front of everyone and tearfully proclaimed, "The way that I publicly treated

you was only per your wish and request. You can attest that you asked me to publicly belittle you."

Amazingly, the deceased Rav Yosef, ZT"L, nodded his head in agreement!

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*



The Parsha describes to us the procedure of bringing Bikurim. It was an amazing scene. The farmers that had worked so hard on their fields, were now able to share the fruits of their labour with The Ribboino Shel Olam. They brought up their fruit to the Beis Hamikdash in beautiful baskets.

And then the Torah tells us something very interesting - **וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל-** **הַטּוֹב** - '***Then, you shall rejoice with all the good***.' (26:11)

The question begs to be asked – Why was is necessary for the Torah to tell us to be happy, when it was such a happy, joyful time anyway?

The Mishna in Mesechta Bikurim describes the scene - The Mishnah describes the bringing of the first fruit as an elaborate and joyous ceremony. All of the Jews in a region would gather together. As they walked to Yerushalayim, the procession was led by an ox with adorned with golden horns and a crown of olive leaves. They would proceed slowly, singing the entire way. The Bikkurim were brought in elaborate vessels, adorned with doves. Upon reaching Yerushalayim, the city officials would come and greet the pilgrims. Upon reaching the Temple Mount even the wealthiest individuals would personally carry their Bikkurim until reaching the

altar. There, they would thank Hashem for the Exodus, the land of Israel and for all of Hashem's blessings.



The manner of bringing Bikkurim is a tremendous lesson. The procession and the ornamentation demonstrate that a Mitzvah is not a burden, but rather an act of love and joy. We are privileged to serve Hashem and whether a Mitzvah entails physical or financial exertion, we rejoice in fulfilling it. When there is joy there is a bond of love that elicits blessings in every manner.

Why would the Torah tell us specifically now to be joyful?

The answer is an important yet familiar one:- And that is, many times in our lives, we have so much good. Hashem bestows upon us so much good, and yet we are still not happy – We just don't appreciate it!



The Sefas Emes says that our parsha brings down this topic specifically after last week's Parsha of Amalek coming to attack Klal Yisrael, which came about from a lack of Hakaros Hatov. Therefore, this week's Parsha begins with Bikurim, which displays our Hakaros Hatov.

The story is told of a 92-year-old man who was awaiting a new room at the old age home. He was waiting in the reception area until the receptionist came over to him, and said, "Mr Jones, your room is now ready."

He smiled delightfully like a child who had just received a lollipop, and he follows the receptionist towards his room. As they get closer

to his room, the receptionist begins describing all the facilities and how beautiful the décor and comforts are.

Mr Jones said, "I love it!"

The receptionist said, "just wait, when you see your room, you are going to love it even more."

He replied, "You are making a mistake – Happiness is in the mind, not how you arrange the furniture! – I have already decided to love it!"

This week's Parsha teaches us that sometimes we can have so much good, but we might not see it or appreciate it.

Hakaros Hatov - **וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב**. Be happy with all the good that you have.

Have a beautiful Shabbos!



Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

וְהָיָה אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לִשְׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל־הַקְּלָלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהִשִּׂיגוּךָ – '***And it will be, if you do not obey the L-rd, your G-d, to observe to fulfil all His commandments and statutes which I am commanding you this day, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you***.' (28:15)

In this week's Parsha, there is a list of curses that will befall Klal Yisrael in certain circumstances. Rashi asks: "What is the difference between this list of curses and the curses mentioned previously in Parshas Bechukosai?"

Rashi answers - **קְלָלוֹת הַלָּלוּ מֹשֶׁה מִפִּי עַצְמוֹ אֲמָרָן, וְשֶׁבְּהַר סִינַי מִפִּי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֲמָרָן** - that the previous curses were mentioned by Hashem, whereas in our Parsha, they are said by Moshe Rabbeinu. **הֵקֵל מֹשֶׁה בְּקִלְלוֹתָיו** – Moshe Rabbeinu spoke over here in a softer way, in a milder and calmer fashion. The question is, why did Moshe Rabbeinu speak this way?

I think the answer is that though sometimes things need to be said – it all depends how it is related. The tone of our voice can change everything.

There was an old Yid living in the *shtetle* in Europe, who owned a small store. His son came to him one day, and said, "Father, there is not much future for me to stay here – will you please lend me some money so that I can try to do some different business in a faraway big city?" - The father said, "My dear son, no problem, here is some money and I hope that you will be successful."

After a couple of months, the father receives a telegram from the son. The father is very excited to hear what his son has to say, but unfortunately, he is illiterate. The father asks the first customer who comes into his shop to read the telegram out to him.

The customer is grumpy and in a bad mood. He reads the telegram as follows, "Father, I have run out of money – I need more, send it straight away!"

When the father heard this, he thought, "What? Is this the thanks that my son has? Is this the way he speaks to me, after everything that I've done for him?" The father was sad for the rest of the day, until he decided to ask another customer to read out the telegram again.

This time the customer had a much happier disposition, upbeat and had more time. He read the telegram as follows: "Dear father, I hope you are well. I have found a potentially good business here, but unfortunately, the money that you gave me has dwindled quicker than I imagined. Please can you send some more as quickly as possible in order that I should be successful – Your loving son…" - All of a sudden, the father felt like a million dollars. "Ah, that's what my son meant."

So many times, in our relationships and our communications, certain things need to be said to our children, our spouses, workmates or

friends – But it depends how we say it, and the tone of voice can change everything.

This is what Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching in this week's Parsha.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה





The mitzvah of *bikkurim* began when a farmer in Israel (and some of the surrounding areas) would go out to his field and find budding fruit, and tie a reed around them, verbally declaring them "first fruits." **כֵּיצַד מַפְרִישִׁין הַבִּכּוּרִים. יוֹרֵד אָדָם בְּתוֹךְ שָׂדֵהוּ וְרוֹאֶה תְּאֵנָה שֶׁבִּכְּרָה, אֶשְׁכּוֹל שֶׁבִּכֵּר, רִמּוֹן שֶׁבִּכֵּר, קוֹשְׁרוֹ בְּגֶמִי, וְאוֹמֵר, הֲרֵי אֵלּוּ בִּכּוּרִים. *How does one set aside bikkurim? A man goes down into his field, he sees a fig that ripened, or a cluster of grapes that ripened, or a pomegranate that ripened, he ties a reed-rope around it and says: "Let these be bikkurim."*** (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:1) **אָדָם יוֹרֵד לְתוֹךְ שָׂדֵהוּ וְרוֹאֶה תְּאֵנָה שֶׁבִּכְּרָה, כּוֹרֵךְ עָלֶיהָ גֶּמִי לְסִימָן וְאוֹמֵר "הֲרֵי זוֹ בִּכּוּרִים" (ספרי; בכורים ג׳)**: (Rashi)

The Mitzvah of Bikurim was a display of Hakaros Hatov to the Ribboino Shel Olam. There is a bit of a misunderstanding that the **גֶּמִי** had to be a red string. This is not the case.

The Rambam says (Pirush HaMishnayos) says **גמי ידוע ובערבי גמאם והכונה בזה שירשום אותם באיזה דבר שיזדמן כדי שיכיר אותם ומה שייחד**

גמי כפי הנהוג – that it is a minhag to use a durable reed that does the job but could be anything similar.

The word **גֶּמִי** is used here because of the following connotation: **Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov** asks, "What is the whole inyan of Bikurim?"

The Mitzvah of Bikurim was a display of Hakaros Hatov to the Ribboino Shel Olam. As soon a farmer's produce begins to grow, he might think that it is his own handiwork, the fruits of his own toil.

However, a person must realize that this is all possible only due to Hashem, Who orchestrates everything. This is hinted to in the roshei teivos of **גמי** - **ג: גדולים מ: מעשה י: י-ה ו-ה**

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series



Bikurim was a display of Hakaros Hatov to the Ribboino Shel Olam. This was a once-a-year mitzvah which was an unbelievable experience. The inspiration received lasted for the entire year!

Hakaros Hatov is not just gratitude to another person who has done you a favour, but to The Ribboino Shel Olam Himself. - I once heard from **Rabbi Yitzchok Hellman**: If Reuven does Shimon a favour, Shimon says, "Oh, thank you so much."

Why is he saying 'thank you?' - Because deep down he doesn't want to be beholden to Reuven. He doesn't want to be a *baal chov*. And at the same time, Reuven doesn't really want the 'thank you', because he wants Shimon to remain a baal chov.

A real person is somebody who can be **מכיר טוב**. Not just to the person that did him the favour – but for the good that ultimately comes from Hashem.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

וְהֶשִׁיבְךָ ה' מִצְרַיִם בָּאֳנִיּוֹת בַּדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי לְךָ לֹא תֹסִיף עוֹד לִרְאֹתָהּ ***And Hashem will bring you back to Egypt in ships, through the way about which I had said to you***. (28:68)



The B'nei Yissaschar asks – we didn't exit by ship, so why will we be brought back by ship? And why go from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt by sea, when it's possible to go by land? So, how do we explain what the Pasuk means? And what is so bad about being sent to Mitzrayim by ship?

The B'nei Yissaschar answers that *Hester Panim (Hashem's hiddenness)* is the biggest curse that we can have. This is represented by the letters that surround and are hiding **י-ה-ו-ה**. The **י** is surrounded by (the letters on either side) a **ט** and a **כ**.[29] The **ה** is surrounded by a **ד** and a **ו**.[10] The **ו** is surrounded by a **ה** and a **ז**.[12]. The **ה** is surrounded by a **ד** and a **ו**.[10]- The total equals 61, which is the gematria of the letters that cloak and hide the letters of **י-ה-ו-ה**.

This 61 is the gematria of **אני**! So Hashem says – 'I will send you back **בָּאֳנִיּוֹת** - in a way that you won't see the direct **יד ה'**.

As it says in parshas Ha'azinu **רְאוּ עַתָּה כִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא וְאֵין אֱלֹקִים עִמָּדִי** '***See now that it is I! I am the One, and there is no god like Me.***' (32:39) Even the Hester Panim was Me!

Do Millions of Mitzvos in a Second

The Beis Halevi writes that the commandment to love every Jew is a positive commandment. - This implies that the love of every single individual Jew is a separate mitzvah on its own, and therefore, the more Jews one loves, the more mitzvos one accrues.

The Alter of Kelm points out how unique the mitzvah of *Ahavas Yisrael* is, for in just one split second, one can fulfil millions of mitzvos at once!

The Blessing within the Curse

The Alter Rebbe would read the Torah in public. One year, he was away during the Torah reading of Ki Savo, and his young son and future successor, **Rabbi Dovber**, heard someone else read the portion, which includes G-d's severe rebuke of the Jewish people. The son became so distressed that he fainted, and weeks later it was still questionable whether he'd be able to fast on Yom Kippur.

The chasidim later asked him: "In previous years you didn't faint; what happened this year?" The boy responded, "When father reads it, I don't hear curses!"

When Hashem has given you a large number of possessions, do not forget to thank Him for even the minor items that He has given you. ~ R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l

With All Your Heart 👤 By R' Paysach Krohn

Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim 116:3-4 ~ צָרָה וְיָגוֹן אֶמְצָא '..*and when I had trouble and grief.*' ~ וּבְשֵׁם־ה׳ אֶקְרָא '*I called out in the name of Hashem.*'

But do you know what he also said?

כּוֹס־יְשׁוּעוֹת אֶשָּׂא וּבְשֵׁם ה׳ אֶקְרָא ~ '*When I was victorious, I shall lift up a cup of salvations, and I shall call out in the name of Hashem.*' *(Tehillim 116:13)*

I got the house. I got the job. I got the child. I got the shidduch. My daughter got married.

All these things - כּוֹס־יְשׁוּעוֹת אֶשָּׂא – Daven with the same intensity and feeling as when things are challenging! Call out to Hashem in the same way! וּבְשֵׁם ה׳ אֶקְרָא.

Anybody who can daven when things are going good in the same way that he davens when things are not so good, that's a person of integrity. And that's what we must learn. We have so much 'stuff' going on. Everybody has got 'stuff'. "***Everybody you meet, is going through something that you know nothing about***!" We don't know what's going on in their lives.

Everybody's got stuff – But everybody has got 'good stuff' as well! There is a lot of good in this world.

And that's what we should do. We should daven, like Dovid Hamelech, for the good ~ with the same intensity!

"A Jew's greatness is not measured by brilliance, but by willingness to listen. One who accepts guidance rises higher than one who relies only on himself." ~ Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman.

Moritz Hochschild: Ruthless Capitalist or Heroic Savior of Jews?



Moritz Hochschild in Lima, Peru around 1962

Dr. Moritz (Don Mauricio) Hochschild was one of the most famous men in the mining industry in the first half of the twentieth century and was one of the three so-called Bolivian tin barons. It is now known that he saved between 9,000-22,000 Jews during the Holocaust as well, giving them refuge in Bolivia. The man behind this effort was Moritz (Mauricio) Hochschild (1881-1965), a mining magnate whose mines accounted for a sizable percentage of Bolivia's exports.

In the 1930s and early 1940s, Hochschild, a non-observant German Jew, hobnobbed with Bolivia's elite, including presidents, generals and business leaders. Because of his huge economic influence, Hochschild was able to convince Bolivian government officials that it was in their economic interest to offer visas to imperilled European Jews. As a result of Hochschild's cajoling, the Bolivian government decreed, in June 1938, that its "doors are open to anyone … who is healthy in body and spirit, anyone who wants to come and work."

Hochschild's efforts have come to light relatively recently. After Bolivia nationalized the mining industry in 1952, Hochschild's business in Bolivia was shut down. The company's offices, in a suburb of La Paz, were left alone for many years and fell into ruin. In 1999, decades after Hochschild's 1965 death, a search in the mining operation's offices turned up a trove of important papers from the 1930s and 1940s. A team of masked and gloved investigators moved in and began to study and catalogue thousands of letters, receipts

and other documents. In 2004 those investigators began releasing some of what they'd found, and they have continued to do so, posting the results in public archives.

What they discovered was that besides saving thousands of Jewish lives during the war, Hochschild also shipped tin and other raw minerals to smelters in the U.S. at below market price, providing the U.S. with materials for making ammo boxes, weapons, medical equipment, airplane parts and tin cans that preserved food.

In his lifetime Hochschild did not publicize his heroic role. In fact, he was called a "ruthless tin baron" who paid low wages to his employees. He was subjected to antisemitic slurs by Bolivian politicians and journalists who garnered support when they called him a "foreign exploiter" and "the worst kind of businessman."

The letters and documents that have been made public decades after his death have led to a reassessment of Hochschild. Rather than labelling him "ruthless exploiter," he's now called "the Bolivian Schindler."

What's been discovered in recent years has changed opinions about him, in Bolivia as well as in the rest of the world. The letters and documents that have been made public decades after his death have led to a reassessment of Hochschild. Rather than labeling him "ruthless exploiter," he's now called "the Bolivian Schindler."

But who *was* Moritz (Mauricio) Hochschild?

He was born in 1881 into a middle-class Jewish family in Biblis, Germany, a suburb of Frankfurt. He studied mining engineering in nearby Freiberg, then worked as a mining engineer in Spain. After that he spent five years in Australia's mining areas. He then went to Chile, where he continued to work in different aspects of the mining industry: buying ore and selling it to smelters abroad. In 1919, one year after World War I ended, he returned to South America, this time to Bolivia, where he lived and worked for the next 25 years.

In 1947, long before his actions as "The Bolivian Schindler" became known, the financial magazine Fortune described Hochschild this way: He is "a slightly mysterious South American mining overlord … [with] a great, bald boulder of a head, burning eyes under bushy brows, and a heroic nose leading down to a bristling moustache."

The article points out that "the most remarkable thing about the remarkable Hochschild head is that it has remained comfortably affixed to his shoulders … though so often in danger." Hochschild was a mining mogul in a country where wealthy entrepreneurs were sometimes jailed or kidnapped and he was subjected to both of those indignities: jailed twice, kidnapped once. When he refused to go along with what he considered an unfair government demand, one Bolivian president even threatened the Jewish mining titan with execution, a threat that was not carried out, his advisers having talked the president out of having Hochschild killed.

His having been jailed, kidnapped and threatened may explain why Hochschild remained secretive about his role in bringing refugees to Bolivia. When writing to American Jews involved in bringing European Jews to Bolivia, however, Hochschild was open about his involvement.

In the trove of documents that have been made public, there's an April 1940 letter from Hochschild to James N. Rosenberg, Chairman of the Agro-Joint project—an agency that placed Jewish refugees in farms located in various countries. When writing to Rosenberg, Hochschild was clear about his role in how the visas came about: "I arranged with the [Bolivian] government that we could bring in a total of 30,000 Jews for colonization."

Though this letter was a plea for more money to help settle Jewish refugees, it's also clear from other documents that Hochschild used vast amounts of his own money in his efforts to save Jews and help the Allies win the war.

There's no doubt that Hochschild exploited workers who made him wealthy. On the other hand, he saved tens of thousands of Jews and

helped the Allies win the war. Saint or devil? This complex man was probably a bit of both, like most of us.

In 1951, the Hochschilds donated the majority of their fortune to the Hochschild Trust and Foundation. Moritz Hochschild died in 1965 in Paris.

The Only Address Needed

Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa recommends, whatever we do, we should pray to Hashem. Success is in Hashem's hands, so we should daven to Him for success with everything we do.

Reb Shimshon Pincus wrote a letter (Nefesh Shimshon, Igros u'Mamarim, p.53) to a bachur who was going through difficult times b'ruchniyus and b'gashmiyus.

Reb Shimshon wrote, "You are in a situation that is beyond your strength to resolve alone. You made all necessary hishtadlus, and it seems that you need help from elsewhere. Therefore, I will give you a name and address where you can turn for your aid. He is called Hashem yisborach.

His strength is without limits. He created everything, and the secret is that he loves you in an individualized, special way and is waiting and yearning that you should turn to Him. There is no problem in finding Hashem's address because Hashem is everywhere.

Even as you read this letter, you can turn to Him…"

There are three things you can do with your life: You can waste it, you can spend it, or you can invest it.



In Krakow, a poor man sat at the street corner selling homemade bagels. One morning, a wealthy person recognized the poor man and said, "You're a *talmid chacham,* and you come from an illustrious family! It isn't proper that you should do this for your *parnassah*. I will give you a weekly stipend so that you can study Torah in the beis medresh by day and by night."

This agreement lasted a few weeks, but one day, the wealthy man saw him sitting at the street corner, selling bagels again. He protested, "We have an agreement. What happened?"

"I don't want to be supported anymore," the poor man replied.

"But a deal is a deal. You can't back out without a *din Torah*."



This unusual *din Torah* was brought to the **Megaleh Amukos *zt'l***. The Megaleh Amukos asked the poor man why he refused to accept the weekly stipend, which would enable him to study Torah without disturbances.

The poor man replied, "When my wife and I were in the bagel business, we constantly turned our eyes to Hashem. As my wife prepared the bagels, she davened to Hashem that the bagels come out tasty and beautiful, and when I was outdoors chopping wood for the oven, I davened that I should

find dry wood, which is better for baking. When I sat at the corner, I davened that people should buy from me. We were constantly davening for *siyata dishmaya*. But now that we have a stipend, we daven less. Therefore, we decided to return to our previous lifestyle."

The Megaleh Amukos praised the couple for their devotion to Hashem.

Shortly before this episode, the Megaleh Amukos notified the people of Krakow of his resignation. He never told them the reason he wanted to leave Krakow, and despite their many requests, he refused to disclose the reason. But because of this poor couple's desire to have a constant connection with Hashem, the Megaleh Amukos changed his mind and remained in Krakow.

He said he wanted to be among such special people who seek a constant relationship with Hashem.

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - A Divine Gift

The Sefer Avoda She'balev by the **Skulener Rebbe zt"l** comments on the blessing, "Pokeiach Ivrim—Hashem opens up the eyes of those who cannot see." How interesting it is that during the night, our eyes are closed. We cannot see. In the morning, we open our eyes and magically we are able to see the entire world. There is no greater kindness from Hashem, writes the Skulener Rebbe, than being able to see in this world.

Some time ago, I had the tremendous merit to dance with a chosson, groom. But not just any chosson. A chosson who does not have the gift of sight. Lavi Greenspan. I danced at that wedding with such joy, knowing that I am dancing with a tzaddik. We learn every Thursday night, when Lavi calls me and we delve into one particular point on the Parsha.

One night, about a year ago, after we finished learning, Lavi said, "Rebbe, I want to buy you a sefer." "Lavi," I said, "thank you very much, but Baruch Hashem, I have a nice seforim collection."

"You don't understand," said Lavi. "Rebbe, after 120 years, I'm going to go to Shamayim and they're going to ask me which seforim I looked into and read. But I can't see. So I'm going to say, 'I bought a sefer for Rabbi Goldwasser and he did the learning with his eyes for me.'"

I hung up the telephone and I thought to myself, "Master of the World, what a gift we all have." How careful we must be with that precious gift of sight, of seeing all the good things in this world, of seeing the good in others, of seeing pages of seforim, of seeing the Gemara, of seeing all the mitzvos that we can look at. Those are for our eyes. And of course, we will be very careful not to see the things that we shouldn't.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

In late March 2020, just before Pesach, R' Boruch Rabinowitz related what two of his sons asked during the onset of the coronavirus: "What would *zaide*, R' Akiva Eiger Schlussel (1927-2011), say about what we are living through (the coronavirus where tens of thousands died and hundreds of thousands were infected) such as the closing of schools, shuls, stores and staying in our homes?"

R' Rabinowitz's wife ruminated and said this is what her father would say: "You are restricted where to go and how many people could congregate but you can stay at home and be in your own bed. No bunker, ghetto or sleeping with animals in a barn. You can go to sleep tonight and expect yourself and your family to be in the same place in the morning.

In regards to food: You have enough food in your homes for weeks to survive. You have a Costco! You don't have to ration a few grains of barley per person daily. You have water. I can't believe it! Fresh water without limit and you don't have to boil it first. You go into a bathroom and flush and don't need to use a pail in a corner with other people around. You can go outside to get food and there is food to be gotten. You can go outside to get food without fear of being shot if you're discovered. You can take a shower or bath with soap and shampoo along with warm water.

You have Tallis and Tefillin and you can Daven as long and as loud as you want without having to be afraid of being discovered by the Nazis who would shoot you. You can gather on your own porches and sing Kabbalas Shabbos. You can have a Shabbos Seuda with real chicken soup and not a modicum of salt and water leaving the rest to the imagination.

Real fresh fish on Shabbos! Chulent! Challa: Soft and chewy bread and not hard mouldy coarse bread. You can get more than one slice in a day without needing to hide it from other people looking to steal every extra morsel…

Heat: You can feel your fingers and toes when you wake up each morning. You have air conditioning in your homes and you therefore don't suffer from the heat and the stench. You have shoes without holes and more than one pair!

You have sefarim to learn from, and all types of sefarim so that you can be locked up for weeks and months and you won't die of boredom. You have access to shiurim via the internet, phone and computer. You have access to the outside world and at least know there is an outside world. You can know what's happening out there. You can be in touch with family and check in to see how they are doing and never think that you are from the last ones alive.

If you need medicine, you can get them from a pharmacy. You plan on making a seder with real wine and Matza and you have a choice of

Matza—Regular, whole wheat, spelt and oat. You have enough *kzaisim* for whatever shiur you desire—Chazon Ish, R' Chaim Naeh—and enough for each person. You have Maror prechecked and enough for each person. You have chicken as well as meat. Vegetables also, and not moldy potatoes. Potato peels with something inside! You have wine—dry, semi-dry and sweet. And four cups for each person. And you have mevushal, non-mevushal in addition to the choice of wines by region, country and taste.

You have showers, baths, sefarim, shiurim. You have family, food, water, bathrooms, pillows and blankets. You have each other. You are not living with fear of being shot at a moment's notice. You have all the above and you're complaining.

You know what *zaide* would have said! My dear pure children, there is nothing to complain about. Even when it's painful—people dying and getting sick from the coronavirus including Talmidei Chachamim, Rabbanim, Jews, all ages and genders—but realize what you have. Bed, food, heating, bath, shower, sefarim, shiurim, Jewish people, nice neighbourhood, being alive, medicines, Pesach Seder, fresh air and not worried that enemies will shoot you when you step outside the door."

Why So Machmir?

Upon being asked why he was so stringent in Halachah, the Brisker Rav answered with a question of his own:

"Would you be willing to sleep on the roof of a hundred-story building, if there was no gate around its parameters? You wouldn't want to sleep there even if you weren't at the edge. If you are so afraid and cautious for your physical wellbeing, shouldn't you be concerned and cautious for your spiritual wellbeing as well?"

Va'ani Tefillah - עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל



In his commentary to *Berachos* 32b, **the *Meiri*** offers another reason for the placement of *Aleinu* at the culmination of the prayer service.

Just as it is appropriate and commendable to pause prior to *davening* to think about before Whom we stand and what we are going to say, it is, likewise, proper to take a step back at the end of our prayers to reflect on what we have said and to Whom we have spoken.

A "hit and run" *davening* is neither respectful nor particularly effective. It defeats the entire purpose. It is almost as if we had unloaded a heavy load, dropped it off, and ran away.

The *Chida, zl*, offers an alternative explanation which he saw in a manuscript authored by ***Rav Vidal HaTzarfati***. One should not think that, once he has completed *davening,* he has fulfilled his obligation to Hashem, and he can now go along his merry way.

The *Aleinu tefillah* indicates that, even after one has successfully completed the *davening* and has done so with complete *kavanah*, concentration and devotion, he must still praise Hashem for selecting us as His People.

"Bitachon is the calm knowledge that whatever Hashem does is for the greatest good. This serenity is the joy of the believer." ~ Chazon Ish.

Why We Light Yahrtzeit Candles for Parents by Rabbi Yair Hoffman



It is the custom within the community, Klal Yisroel, to light a Yahrzeit candle on the day that a relative had passed away. This article will discuss the reasons for it, but first – a tefillah:

The lighting has no accompanying blessing, and I am sure that many people find themselves looking for something appropriate, some way to express themselves in a prayer when lighting the candle. This is not only true on a Yahrzeit but whenever Yom Tov comes as well and Yizkor is said.

The author of the **Peleh Yoetz, Rabbi Eliezer Papo** (1785–1828), did in fact compose such a prayer. Rav Papo was the Rabbi of the city of Selestria in Bulgaria. Bulgaria was a part of the Ottoman Empire at the time. The Tefillah of the Pelehe Yoetz is reproduced in Hebrew and translated below, as a public service.

הריני מדליק נר זה למנוחת ולעילוי נשמת אבי מורי (אמי מורתי) _ בן

תפילה הנמצאת בספר אלף המגן מבעל הפלא יועץ על פרשת ויצא עמוד כ"ד

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו, שתקבל ברחמים וברצון כל מעשה הטוב שאני עושה, בין במחשבה, בין בדיבור, בין במעשה ויהיה הכל לזכות ולמנוחת ולעילוי לנשמות עמך ישראל, ובפרט לנפש רוח של (אמי/אבי/נפטר) _____. יהי רצון שתהיינה נפשותיהם צרורות בצרור החיים.

Behold I am lighting this lamp for the rest and uplifting of the soul of my father (or deceased), my teacher _____ the son of _____.

May it be Your will before you, Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers, that all my good deeds whether in thought, speech or action be done for a merit and a resting and an elevation of the souls of your nation Israel. It should be

especially for the soul of my mother/father/ deceased _____. May it be Your will that their souls be bound in the bond of life.

The Reasons

Please note that much of the information below is found in Rav Aharon Levine's sefer called "Kol Bo L'Yartzeit (Vol. I Ch. 1)."

• It is a fulfilment of the Mitzvah of V'ahavta l'rayacha kamocha. **Rav Yitzchok Isaac Sherr Zt'l** cites three sources for the application of this Mitzvah to parents. The Zohar writes that we are obligated to love our parents as we do ourselves, for their love is equated to the love of Hashem. The Sefer Chareidim 9:37 writes that loving them is part of the Mitzvah of honoring them. The Chayei Odom 67:1 also writes that we are obligated in loving them. The matter is of some debate, however, as the Maharal in his Chidusshei Agados 31a seems to be of the opinion that there is no greater obligation to love parents more so than other Jews.

• **It is a fulfilment of Kivud Av v'aim**. The Gemorah Kiddushin 31b explains that the Rabbis taught- You honour him in his lifetime and you honour him after death. Both Dayan Weiss and the Tzitz Eliezer are of the opinion that Kivud Av v'Aim after death is also biblical.

• **It is an obligation of Hakaras HaTov** – recognizing the good that one had received from another. This is particularly true that we should recognize all that parents have done for us on a day that we have the ability to give merit to their neshama and assist in their receiving greater reward.

• **It brings a Kapparah/atonement for the Neshamos**. The Arizal writes that the Neshama's record is reviewed on the day of the Yarhrtzeit. Thus when the children do maasim tovim, learn Torah, say kaddish and do other Mitzvos, this atones for anything the Neshamah might have done.

• **It brings an elevation for the Neshama**. Even if the Neshama was free of sin, there are different aspects of performances of Mitzvos that are taken into account when the Neshama reaches the upper realms. Observance of the Yahrtzeit assists in elevating the Neshama.

• **It is a fulfilment of Hashavas Aveidah**. The Gemorah in Sanhedrin explains that saving one's life is a fulfillment of returning a lost object. Certainly, this would be so in regard to restoring the soul to a loftier level.

• **It avoids violating Lo Saamod al Dam Rayacha**. The Torah tells us not to stand idly by one's brother's blood. If we just ignore an opportunity to place a parent on a higher spiritual level – this is tantamount to standing idly by another's blood.

• **It is the fulfilment of the obligation to perform Chessed**. The greatest Chessed is the one that is done to someone that cannot return the favor. Those that cannot repay anyone. Observing a Yahrtzeit is thus one of the greatest Chassadim.

• **It counteracts the Raya Mazlei of the Neshama**. When a Neshama ultimately passes away, there is a Raya Mazlei aspect to him. Although we say Ain mazal l'yisroel – at times there are elements that effect the mazal too according to some Rishonim. Observing the Yahrtzeit through the act of free choice of his descendents – counters that force.

• **It is proper to be pained on that day**. This is the day that we have lost a parent. It is wrong not to feel pain on that day.

• **It commemorates the day of one's loss**. Only when we truly know the pain of losing something do we truly appreciate the value of what we have. We can appreciate the gifts that Hashem has given us when we commemorate and understand the loss.

• **It affords one to empathize with the pain of the parent**. Empathy is a very human characteristic that Hashem wants us to develop. On the day of the Yahrtzeit we are empathizing with them.

• **It strengthens our belief in Tchiyas HaMeisim**. One of the pillars of Torah true Judaism is the eventual restoring of the dead. Also, if we ponder the gift of the yearly seasons, we see how things that wither away eventually come back. This helps us in our belief in Techias HaMeisim. The same is true with a Yahrtzeit – it helps entrench within us the fundamentals of our emunah.

Rabbi Binyomin Weinrib - Strong Chevra



The Gemara (*Succah* 52b) gives us the ultimate strategy that one should use when he finds himself in a *nisayon*: **אִם פָּגַע בְּךָ מְנַוָּול זֶה מָשְׁכֵהוּ לְבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ** —

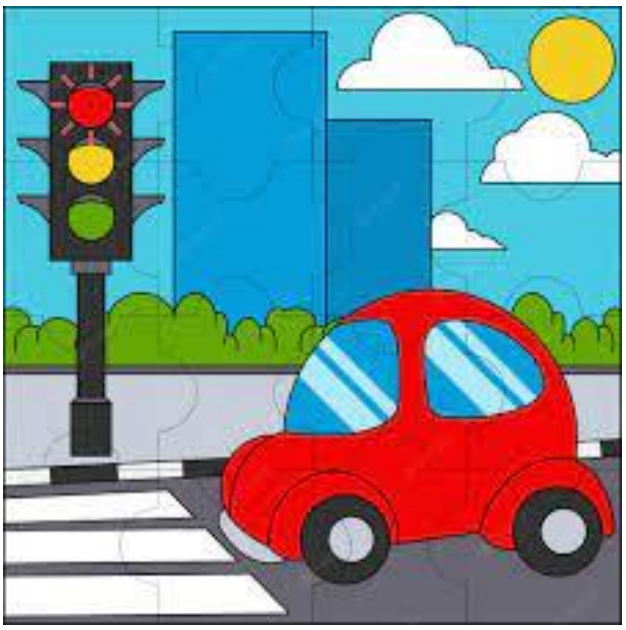
"If this degenerate (i.e. the evil inclination) meets you, drag him to the study hall." In this way, you will be able to overcome your temptation to sin.

The Gemara, however, does not tell us that a person needs to go to the beis midrash, study hall, *and learn*. The Gemara strictly states that you should drag him to the *beis midrash*.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz *zt"l* explains that when a person is alone, the *yetzer hara* has the capability of attacking them with a vengeance. The angel of Eisav wrestled with Yaakov Avinu specifically when he was alone and apart from his family (*Bereishis* 32:24). Precisely at that vulnerable moment, the angel of Eisav seized the opportunity. The solution is to therefore bring the *yetzer hara* to the *beis midrash* and surround yourself with

good people. Even if you are not learning or davening in the *beis midrash*, just go there. Go to a place where you are going to be surrounded by a *chevra*. Be around a good group of friends, and through that, you'll be better able to overcome the challenge.

When you are alone, the challenges are so much greater. Surround yourself with a good circle of friends who will be a positive influence on you and encourage you and give you the strength to overcome the *yetzer hara*.



Short And Sweet Story of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, was in a taxi when a secular driver began to grumble as to why the rabbis always seemed to make life so difficult for the Jews. He could not understand why it was necessary for them to create additional fences around the existing prohibitions of the Torah.

A few minutes later, the car stopped at a traffic light. Rav Shlomo Zalman said, "why do these traffic lights make our life difficult - I am in a rush and we have to stop!"

The driver stared at the rabbi in the amazement. "Rabbi, those lights protect us from other reckless drivers," he argued, "without them, we would probably get killed!"

Rav Shlomo Zalman concurred and added. "Now you understand the need for rabbinic fences. Without them, we would probably transgress all the other sins. They, too, protect us!"

100 Years Later History to be Made Again in Same Hall in Vienna Where Rav Meir Shapiro Proposed Daf HaYomi



Some locations are so historic that they defy the imagination. One such place is the historic Sofiensäle Hall in Vienna, a concert hall where, during the month of *Elul* one-hundred years ago the groundbreaking, world-changing concept of the Daf HaYomi was proposed by the young Rav of the Polish town of Sonik. This year on *motzoei* Shabbos *Bereishis*, history will once again be made in that very hall in Vienna. That same hall will be filled to capacity once more, graced and led by leading *Gedolei Yisrael* and leading *Roshei Yeshiva*, Rabbanim, and *maggidei shiur*, as they celebrate a *siyum* on Seder Nashim and half of the present Daf HaYomi cycle.

Even more exciting, a new Klal Yisrael learning initiative that promises to have a transformative impact on *Yidden* and Torah learning the world-over will be proposed in that very location where Rav Meir Shapiro with his booming voice and optimism launched the Daf HaYomi.

The *siyum* will be the climax of a Historic Mission spearheaded by Dirshu and led by Gedolei Yisrael that will begin with a visit and special *tefillos* on behalf of Klal Yisrael at the kever of the Chasam Sofer in Pressburg within three days of his *yahrtzeit*, and continue with Dirshu's International Shabbos Convention in Pressburg.

The climax will be the celebration, the *siyum*, will be held at the historic Sofiensäle Hall in Vienna where the first Knessia Gedolah was held in Elul of 1923, when Rav Meir Shapiro proposed the Daf HaYomi.

Among the leading Gedolei Yisrael who will grace the Shabbos and the *siyum* will be HaGaon HaRav Dovid Cohen, *shlita*, Rosh Yeshivas Chevron; HaGaon HaRav Yaakov Meir Stern, *shlita, talmid muvhak* of Rav Shmuel Wosner and one of Eretz Yisrael's leading *poskim* and *dayanim*; HaGaon HaRav Shimon Galei, *shlita*; HaGaon HaRav Chaim Peretz Berman, *shlita*, a Rosh Yeshiva at the Ponevezh Yeshiva; HaGaon HaRav Gavriel Knopfler, *shlita*, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Shaarei Torah of Manchester, and numerous other Rabbanim and Roshei Yeshiva from Eretz Yisrael and abroad.

Leading the delegation of Gedolim from America will be HaGaon HaRav Hillel David, *shlita*, Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Roshei Yeshiva of Torah Umesorah, member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, and Rav of Kehillas Yeshiva Shaarei Torah.

The inspirational pinnacle of *erev* Shabbos will be the special *maamad tefillah* on behalf of *lomdei* Daf HaYomi and Klal Yisrael led by Gedolei Yisrael at the *kever* of the Chasam Sofer. Klal Yisrael is so in need of *shemirah*, in *ruchniyus* and in *gashmiyus*, in *yeshuos*, *refuos* and shidduchim, and at the makom Kadosh the burial place of the Chasam Sofer, around the time of his *yartzeit* is the opportune time to invoke *rachamei shomayim*.

Peninei Emunim — Pearls of Tefillah in the Parashah

Saying 'L'Shem Yichud' Before the Mitzvah



Harav Shlomo Kluger explained the virtue in saying "L'Shem Yichud" before performing a mitzvah with an apt parable: A person was asked to transport a valuable gift for the king in his carriage. Before he left, the wagon driver suddenly began to worry that the gift would be stolen during the long trip. His friend advised him: "Throughout your trip, make sure to let those around you know that the gift you are transporting is for the king, and this way you will know that no one will dare to steal it, because who would dare start up with the king…"

A person who prepares to daven or do a mitzvah should fear the mekatregim and hostile and harmful elements who want to grab it from him. Therefore, it was instituted to precede by saying the tefillah of "L'Shem Yichud" through which he declares that he is dedicating the fulfilment of this mitzvah to the Name of the King of kings.

This way, he can be sure that the mekatregim will be afraid to approach his tefillah or mitzvah and it will make its way with certainty to the Kisei Hakavod.

Based on this, Harav Shlomo Kluger explained the passuk (Tehillim 45:2): "Rachash libi davar tov omer ani ma'asai laMelech." One who comes to do a "davar tov", a good thing, and is afraid that the mekatregim will steal his mitzvah from him, should precede by declaring "My actions are for the King!" and by doing so he is guaranteed that no one will come close.

The Maharsham of Brezhan added that the Torah teaches us this concept in the mitzvah of bikkurim, saying to the one who fulfils this mitzvah: "And you should answer and say," that you are fulfilling this mitzvah "in front of Hashem Elokecha" and by doing so, the mekatregim will not be able to grab it away from you. For this reason, Rashi states: "V'anisa v'amarta – this is a term of raising one's voice." When a person is afraid of those hostile elements, he has to say his words in a whisper (see Tur Orach Chaim 619 regarding saying Baruch Shem…], but with the mitzvah of bikkurim, the mekatregim cannot touch him because he announces and says that he is fulfilling this mitzvah l'Shem Hashem, and therefore, he can say the Mikra Bikkurim aloud.

Working on our Middos



Rav Shalom Shwadron, zt"l, would deliver Mussar Drashos that were filled with humour, and he would make jokes that would poke fun at behaviours that were destructive.

Some people thought that this was inappropriate *Leitzanus*, lightheaded joking around, and they told him that it wasn't proper to speak in this manner.

Rav Shalom wasn't certain if they were correct or not, so he went to ask the **Chazon Ish, zt"l**.

The Chazon Ish said, "Give me an example of what you say at your Drashos."

Rav Shalom Shwadron stood up, took a Shtender, and spoke exactly as he would before many people.

The Chazon Ish laughed and said, "You should always speak that way. With your humour, you will save Bnei Yisroel!"

The Chazon Ish continued and said, "In Lithuania, there were great Talmidei Chachamim, and they were outstanding Yirei Hashem too. But nevertheless, many young people fell to the Haskalah movement, because the Maskilim, the so-called 'enlightened ones' incorporated joy, while we didn't. We need a lot of Simchah today. We must serve Hashem with Simchah!"



וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל־פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תָּבִיא מֵאַרְצְךָ That you shall take of the first of every fruit of the ground that you bring in from your land. *(26:2)*

The *mitzvah* of *Bikkurim*, bringing the first fruits to the *Bais Hamikdash*, teaches us the significance of *hakoras hatov*, recognising the good/benefits we receive and paying gratitude to our benefactor – which, in the case of *Bikkurim*, is Hashem. While anyone who possesses a modicum of common sense understands the importance of gratitude, we do not realise how far the obligation for gratitude goes and how one who does not live with *hakoras hatov* as a way of life is considered a deficient human being.

The *Ramchal* (*Mesillas Yesharim* 8) underscores the importance of every human being aware of and taking a penetrating look, at all of Hashem's wonders and miracles of which he and the rest of the world are the beneficiaries.

-"There is no person, regardless of his circumstances, whether he suffers abject poverty or is blessed with amazing wealth,

whether he is healthy or is unwell, who does not [if he puts his mind to it] notice Hashem's abundant kindness."

Indeed, *hakoras hatov* leads to a strength of one's commitment to Hashem and observance of His *mitzvos*.



Horav Eliezer HaLevi Turk, Shlita (*Otzroseihem Amalei*), quotes a tradition attributed to the ***Gaon, zl, m'Vilna***, who hardly ever uttered a word in any language other than Hebrew – other than "***dank, thank you***." His students explained that the word *dank* has the same *gematria*, numerical equivalent, as *Olam Habba* (*dank – daled, nun, kuf* – 154. *Olam Habba – ayin, vov, lamed, mem, hay, bais, aleph* – 154). This alludes to the idea that one who is *makir tov* will merit *Olam Habba*.

Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, said that *dank* is related to *gedank*, memory. This teaches that one who receives a favour from someone is obligated to remember the debt of gratitude that weighs heavily upon him.

A young *kollel* fellow was seeking to strengthen his *avodas ha'tefillah*, *davening*, to Hashem. He understood that such changes do not just happen. One has to take "baby" steps and progress slowly until he reaches the pinnacle for which he is aspiring. One must have a goal in his prayer, i.e., to pray for a specific achievement, such as: success in Torah study; greater *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven; *menuchas hanefesh*, peace and calm in his life.

He approached *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, zl*, with his question, hoping to hear his sage advice.

Rav Chaim asked him, "Do you have parents?" He replied, "*Baruch Hashem*, until one hundred and twenty."

"*Nu*," said Rav Chaim. "What is your question? The first *tefillah* for which you should pray is for your parents' health. This is *hakoras hatov*, appreciation for what they have done and continue to do for you. This is the first step in growth."

One cannot calculate the long-term benefits enjoyed as the result of an act of kindness. Years later, it is discovered that one's life, and, hence, his success were catalysed by one act of selfless kindness.

When the *Rebbetzin* of ***Horav Refael Kook, zl***, *Rav* of Teverya, was *niftarah*, passed away, ***Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl***, expressed his desire to be *Menachem aveil,* comfort the bereaved. When word reached the ears of the mourners, themselves men of stature in Torah, they responded that it was unnecessary for the aged *Rosh Yeshivah* to make the trip.

Rav Shach insisted on making the journey – regardless of his advanced age and poor health. Furthermore, when he arrived at the home of the deceased, he insisted on climbing up the three floors to their apartment, despite their desire to come downstairs where the *Rosh Yeshivah* could meet with them.

Rav Shach refused to have the mourners alter their schedule or place in which they sat. It took him fifteen minutes to climb the two flights.

As soon as the venerable *Rosh Yeshivah* of Ponvezh entered the room, he was immediately surrounded by members of the family and others who had gathered to comfort the mourners. He sat for a few moments to gather his strength before he spoke.

"I am certain that you surely want to know the reason for my insistence on personally coming here and climbing the steps to meet with you. A number of decades have passed since the time that I studied together with the ***Brisker Rav, zl***. (He had a small group of illustrious students whom he taught daily.) During the period that I

studied with the *Rav*, a member of his household became gravely ill and required around-the-clock care. As a result, the daily schedule for the entire household was upended. They had neither night nor day. The *Rav's* ability to give his *shiur* properly and spend time with his students was hampered. One of the *Rav's* closest students mentioned that he would contact *Rebbetzin* Kook to ask if the ailing young man could recuperate at her home, where the climate was more therapeutic. The *Rebbetzin* was contacted and gladly accepted.

Baruch Hashem, the change of venue appeared to have been what the doctor had ordered. The young man regained his strength. The *Rav* thanked the *Rebbetzin* profusely, not only for playing a major role in the young man's recuperation, but also in allowing his return to his learning and teaching schedule.

In other words, the learning from which I benefited during the time I spent with the *Brisker Rav* was made possible due to the herculean efforts of *Rebbetzin* Kook.

Do I not owe her *hakoras hatov*?"

למודי משה

כי תבא - גליון קפ"ז

Divrei Torah for the Shabbos Table

Happy With Your Lot (*Rabbi Shlomo Price, zt"l*)

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ "*And you shall rejoice in all the good which Hashem your G-d has given unto you, and unto your house*." (26:11)

The farmer has just finished reaping a bountiful crop, fills a basket with *bikkurim* and heads to the *Beis HaMikdosh*. It would seem natural for him to be in good spirits at that time. The Telzer Rosh Yeshiva, **Rav Mordechai Gifter**, asked, why then, does the Torah have to command the farmer to rejoice when he brings his *bikkurim*?

The painful reality, says Rav Gifter, is that happiness is rarely an outcome of the amount of money or possessions that a person has. There are many very happy poor people and many miserable wealthy people.

Happiness is a matter of perspective. [There is a sign that reads, "*A happy man is not a man with a certain set of circumstances, rather a man with a certain set of attitudes*".]

Let us take our farmer. Yes, he is on his way to the *Beis HaMikdosh* with a basket overflowing with *bikkurim*, but did his crop reach his expectations? And even if he was happy with his crop when he left home, when he reaches the *Beis HaMikdosh* he might encounter others whose crop were much larger than his. His *simcha* is dampened.

Concerning this attitude, the Torah commands, "And you shall rejoice in all the good which Hashem your G-d has given unto you, and unto your house."

We have to learn to focus on what we do have and not on what we are missing!



L'Maaseh

Rav Paysach Krohn relates a beautiful story: When Rochel Gold arrived in America with her husband and children, she was determined that her family not fall to the current way of American Jewish life of Chillul Shabbos, eating non-kosher food, and public school education. But this was quite a challenge in 1922!

Mrs. Gold's first priority was finding a Yeshivah for her nine-year-old son, Yankel. She heard of the Yeshivah Rabbi Yakov Yosef (RJJ) on the Lower East Side, and she promptly went with her son to register. She was shocked when the principal told her that the Yeshivah was overcrowded, and they could not accept her son.

After trying many arguments and different lines of reasoning, Mrs. Gold still could not convince the principal to accept her son. Exasperated, she asked, "How long do I have to wait to get him into your Yeshivah?" The answer stunned her when the principal responded, "Two years!"

But Mrs. Gold was resolute, and she proudly said, "If we have to wait, then we will wait."

Mrs. Gold and Yankel left the Yeshivah, and went to sit on one of the steps in front of the Yeshivah building. Mrs. Gold thought to herself, "If I can't get him in to Yeshivah yet, let my son at least hear the children Davening. Let him hear the voice of a Rebbi instructing a child. Let him see Yeshivah Bochurim. We'll wait right here."

They sat there for hours. Mrs. Gold took out her sewing, and Yankel counted all the passing cars.

During recess, one of the Rebbeim noticed her and asked if he could be of assistance. She answered, "I am waiting." He assumed she was waiting for one of the students, but when he noticed her a few hours later in the very same spot, the Rebbi approached her and said, "Excuse me, but who are you waiting for?" She replied, "I am waiting for my son to be accepted into the Yeshivah. Can you help?"

The Rebbi went to the principal and told him about the lady on the front steps. The principal came to see, but did not say anything because he knew he could not help her.

For three days, Mrs. Gold sat there with Yankel, sewing, talking, Davening, and waiting. She explained to anyone who would listen that all she was doing was waiting.

By the fourth day her wait was over. Somehow, room had been made for Yankel. Yankel attended RJJ, as did his children after him, and all of Mrs. Gold's children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren have remained Frum!



The Chofetz Chaim zt'l sent his son-in-law, **Reb Hershel Levinson zt'l, to Reb Chaim Brisker zt'l**, to ask him whom he should appoint to be the rosh yeshiva in Radin. Reb Chaim Brisker advised that they appoint **Reb Moshe Landynski zt'l** because he knew the entire Torah in depth.



Rabbi Moshe Landynski was the rosh yeshiva for about twenty years, and the students loved him. However, the spirit of the day changed, and the popular style of study became what is known as "the Brisker derech halimud."

This new and ingenious approach to Torah study was sweeping the yeshiva world, it was the talk of the time, and the students of the Radin yeshiva didn't want to be left out. The Chofetz Chaim therefore invited **Reb Naftali Trop zt'l** to be among the rosh yeshivos in Radin. Reb Naftali was an expert in this new approach to study, and inevitably, he became the primary rosh yeshiva. - Reb Moshe Landynski lost his prestige.

The Chofetz Chaim spoke to Reb Moshe Landynski and explained that he had no choice. The bachurim wanted the Brisker derech, and if he didn't hire Reb Naftali Trop, the bachurim would leave the yeshiva.

Reb Moshe Landynski replied, "If it is better for the students, then by all means, you did the right thing!"

The Chofetz Chaim was overwhelmed by Reb Moshe's answer. After so many years of devotion to the yeshiva, he didn't take it as an insult that someone took his place.

The Chofetz Chaim told him, "The merit of your *vitur* will protect you. You will live longer than me and Reb Naftali Trop."

Indeed, Reb Naftali Trop was niftar in **תרפ"ט**, the Chofetz Chaim was niftar in **תרצ"ג**, and Reb Moshe Landinski was niftar **תרצ"ח**. The merit of his vatranus granted him a long life.

This is an example of "bending one's heart," to be mevater for another, to let others have their way. This is the greatest merit of all.

Shabbos

There are only two more Shabbosim left in the year. **Reb Yechezkel Levinstein zt'l** would tell his students every year that if we keep these Shabbosim well, we will be saved from all problems.

Chazal say **אלמלא שמרו ישראל שתי שבתות מיד נגאלין** "***If Yidden will keep two Shabbosim, they will immediately be redeemed***."

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein explained that redemption is also for the individual. When a Yid keeps two Shabbosim properly, he will be saved from all of his tzaros. (**Chidushei HaRim** explains similarly.)

"The greatest test of our generation is distraction. One who guards his mind from wandering acquires a strength that previous generations never had to fight for." ~ Rav Moshe Shternbuch.

"The value of a deed is measured by the effort invested, not by the result achieved." ~ Rav Chaim Shmulevitz.

The Gaon's Fear of Speaking *Lashon Horah*

אָרוּר מַכֵּה רֵעֵהוּ בַּסָּתֶר Among the list of "*aruruim*" [curses] mentioned in this week's *parsha* is someone who smites his fellow man in secret (*Devorim* 27:24).

How does someone hit his friend "secretly"? Rashi says the reference is to *lashon horah*. Speaking gossip about one's fellow man behind his back can cause him untold damage. His business can be ruined, his marital prospects can be ruined, his life can be ruined. This is known as "*Makeh es Ray'ei'hu b'Saser*."

Rav Eliyohu Boruch Finkel in his *sefer* on *Chumash* cites an incident about *lashon horah* that I would like to share:

This incident has a pedigree which testifies to its veracity: ***The Chofetz Chaim*** wrote the story in the *Kisvei Chofetz Chaim*. He heard it from Rav Yehoshua Heller, the *Choshen Yehoshua*, who heard it from his Rebbe, the *Nachlas Dovid* (Rav Dovid Tebel), who heard it from Rav Chaim of Volozhin, who heard it from **the Vilna Gaon**. This is not just a "*bubba ma'aseh*" – this is a *ma'aseh* with documented *yichus*!



The Gaon was going somewhere and hired a wagon driver. The wagon driver was driving the horse and buggy. The driver fell asleep. Today, when someone falls asleep at the wheel, the consequences are likely to be fatal. What happened then? The driver fell asleep, so the horse drifted off to the side of the road and started eating some of the produce that was growing in the field on the side of the road.

The non-Jewish owner of the field saw the horse of a Jewish wagon driver helping itself to supper at this Gentile's expense and he became all angry. He ran over to the wagon and saw one person sleeping and one person studying out of a book. He figured the person who was sleeping was the passenger and the person who was up reading the book was the driver. In other words, he assumed that the Gaon of Vilna was the *ba'al ha'agalah* who owned this horse. The farmer beat him up. He physically let him have it.

Somebody asked the Gaon – "Why didn't you say something? You should have protested – 'It is not me who is at fault. It is this other person!'" The Gaon answered, "I did not say that because it would have been *lashon horah*." He went on to add "And if I would have said *lashon horah*, all the Torah that I have written in my life would not save me, and I would come back to this world in a *gilgul* [transmigration of the souls] as a barking dog!"

This story needs to give us food for thought. 'Cursed be he who smites his fellow in secret'. Such was the fear the Gaon had from something which might not have even been *lashon horah*!

Times The Way They Once Were

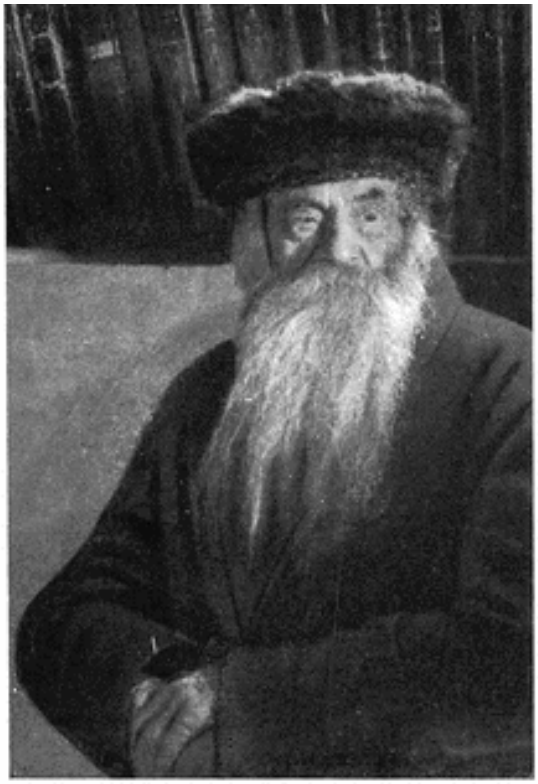
R' Yissocher Frand relates the following:

This past summer, I was on a tour in Europe, and I spent many hours on a bus getting from place to place. Before I left, someone gave me a very interesting book called My Father's Journey: A Memoir of Lost Worlds of Jewish Lithuania. It is written by Sara Reguer, chair of the Department of Jewish Studies in Brooklyn College, based on a written Hebrew memoir of her father. This is not an Artscroll book. This personal memoir does not contain any sugarcoating of life in Jewish Lithuania.

Sara Reguer's father was Moshe Aharon Reguer, son of Rav Simcha Zelig Reguer. Rav Simcha Zelig Reguer was the Brisker Dayan. He

was extremely close to **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik**. They lived in the same two-family house. Rav Simcha Zelig *paskened* all the *shailos* in Brisk. This family was literally the "Real McCoy Litvaks!" and they were proud of it.

What is this book about? It is the story of Rabbi Doctor Moshe Aharon Reguer, who eventually became a professor of Judaic Studies at Yeshiva University. He was a typical Yeshiva *bochur* in Lithuania at the beginning of the twentieth century. If I remember correctly, he left Lithuania in 1927. He attended some of the great *Yeshivos* in Europe, including Slabodka (from which he was thrown out for not being a "typical Slabodka student.") If someone wants to know what it was like to be a Yeshiva *bochur* in Europe in those tumultuous times when "new ideas" of communism and socialism were sweeping Jewish society, the Russian Revolution, and the First World War – this book really gives you a taste of what Europe was like.



One of the Yeshivas he studied in was the Yeshiva in Slutsk. The Rosh Yeshiva in Slutsk was **Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer** (father-in-law of **Rav Aharon Kotler**). Moshe Ahron Reguer described what the month of Elul was like in Slutsk. One day in *shiur* this year, I read this page to my students:

What was Elul like in Slutsk? We are not talking five hundred years ago. We are talking about just 100 years ago – the twentieth century!

Meanwhile, the month of Elul approached. In that month, issues of the Day of Judgement darkened the Yeshiva. The walls of the Yeshiva and the people within took on a new form – that of pain and suffering and weeping. In every corner, you could feel that it was a

season of repentance and that all were breathing with a difficulty borne of internal danger, fear for the soul and knowledge that the future was covered in fog.

In those days, Rav Isser Zalman himself dedicated himself to rousing repentance. He was an expert in this work. Morning and night he would speak of the approaching Day of Judgement and the preparations for it that had to be done in our hearts. With himself as an example, he roused us.

One example he gave rings in my ears – even today – that of a poor lamb ready for slaughter who bleats loudly and feels that this is her last moment. Who knows who this lamb is? "Who is going to die?" he would ask us. He would look at us for an answer and there would come only sobbing. Our tears wet the floors of the houses.

That was Elul in Slutsk, circa 1915. The bochurim would literally cry out of fear. That is a generation that no longer exists.



Make Up Day!

There's one incredible thought that I came across, and since then it changed my entire outlook on challenges.

R' Yisroel Elya Weintraub writes in a letter an incredible brain-waving concept:

Sometimes, when we have a hard day, we think: "If only we can get over this day." Or: "Why do I have to encounter these days? Can't I be past this? They're such a disturbance." But R' Yisroel teaches us the correct approach to this.

He writes that every person was given an amount that he must accomplish in his lifetime. That's what is expected of him in the next world. But out of His great mercy, Hashem knows that sometimes we don't do what we're expected and required to do. So, He therefore gives us a "hard day." How does a hard day save the day? The answer

is that when we serve Hashem and it's hard, we get an ample amount of *s'char*, as Chazal say 'that one with pain is worth one hundred times without,' and therefore we can make up for the missed time.

This is the greatest gift — that we're given a hard day to rectify the lost time or mitzvah. With that, we can fulfil our purpose in this world.

So, the next time we have a difficult day, it's worth remembering that it's a present being sent to us, and we thus shouldn't disgust it but rather cherish it, adore it, and keep it, and with it, we'll fulfil the purpose that we were created for.



משל למה הדבר דומה

אלה דברי הברית אשר צוה ה' את משה לכרת את בנ"י (כח-סט)

The *tefillos* and beseeching of the great *Gaon* and *Tzaddik*, **R' Chaim Shmulevitz *zt"l***, were legendary. He was known to tell people that for a *tefillah* to be truly effective, it must stem from the depth of one's heart. If one does not truly feel pain over what he is asking, his prayer is less likely to be answered.

R' Chaim would advise that before praying for a sick person's recovery, first visit the sick person and see what he is undergoing. This will help you feel his pain and enable your prayers to be heard.

R' Chaim would often pray with great fervour at the site of *Yad Avshalom*, the exotic tombstone of Avshalom, the son of King David, located in the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem.

One of R' Chaim's *talmidim* once asked him about this practice. After all, Avshalom was known to be a wicked *rasha*. He instigated a tremendous rebellion in *Klal Yisroel* and caused his father a great deal of trouble! What reason could R' Chaim have for praying there with such intensity?

"Avshalom did indeed rebel against his father," R' Chaim explained, "but when Dovid heard about his death, he wept bitterly and *davened* that Avshalom merit entry into *Gan Eden*.

From Dovid and Avshalom, we learn that a father's love for his son is unconditional. Even when a son behaves improperly and irrationally - even when he humiliates and tortures his father - his father will still forgive him."

Moshe Rabbeinu gave us a ferocious speech, warning *Bnei Yisroel* that if we rebel against our Father in Heaven, terrible calamities and disasters will befall us. That, however, doesn't take away from the fact that *Hashem* is still our Father in Heaven, always looking out for the best for us. We can repent and ask for forgiveness.

For this reason, the *tochacha*, the admonitions, is always read prior to *Rosh Hashanah*, the great Day of Judgment.

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN תורת הצבי על הפטרות

שְׂאִי־סָבִיב עֵינַיִךְ וּרְאִי כֻּלָּם נִקְבְּצוּ בָאוּ־לָךְ בָּנַיִךְ מֵרָחוֹק יָבֹאוּ וּבְנֹתַיִךְ עַל־צַד תֵּאָמַנָה
~ 'Lift up your eyes all around and see, they all have gathered, they have come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be raised on [their] side.' (Yeshayahu 60:4)

In this week's *Haftorah, Yeshaya HaNavi* proclaims that in the times of *Moshiach, Klal Yisroel* will all gather in the holy city of *Yerushalayim*, where, "*Your sons shall be brought from afar, and your daughters will be waited on at their side.*" The question is why the *Navi* splits up the men and women. In fact, right before these

words, Yeshaya states; *"They will all [Klal Yisroel] gather and come to you [Hashem]..."* So, if all of *Klal Yisroel* will come before *Hashem*, then there shouldn't be a need for the *Navi* to specify again that men and women will come?

The **Ben Ish Chai, Chacham Rav Yosef Chayim of Baghdad *zt"l*** quotes the *Medrash* which tells the story of *Shlomo HaMelech* who once had a conversation with a bird, who insisted that there are more women in the world than men. The king disagreed and after acknowledging that he was right, the bird explained that although physically there might not be more women than men, when a woman rules over a man telling him exactly what to do and how to do it, the man becomes akin to a woman and is thus counted as one.

The *Ben Ish Chai* explains that men and women have their own purposes and responsibilities in life, and a man cannot fulfil a woman's responsibilities and vice-a-versa. So, although *Yeshaya HaNavi* already stated that all of *Klal Yisroel* will gather before *Hashem*, it was still important for him to stress that each gender will arrive with their own purpose and characteristic in their service to the Almighty.

Rav Yoel Rottenstien on the Parsha

וְכָתַבְתָּ עַל־הָאֲבָנִים אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בַּאֵר הֵיטֵב חידושי הרי"ם
"***And you should write on the stones all the words of this Torah.***" (27:8)

Question: Why did Hashem command that the Torah be written on stones?

Answer: Rabbi Akiva was a shepherd until the age of forty. He once came across a stone and was amazed that a hole had formed in it from the constant dripping of water. He concluded that if water can make a hole in a rock, then surely Torah can make an impression on the hearts of man.

By telling Moshe to write the Torah on hard stones, Hashem was telling us that even if a person's head is "thick" (as hard as rock) if he learns Torah constantly it will penetrate and improve him.

Torah is not education, it is transformation.

Tomorrow Never Comes Because Something Always Gets in The Way

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה ה' אלקיך מְצַוְּךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה "This day, Hashem your G-d, commands you to perform these decrees…"

The **חפץ חיים** says that the *yetzer hara* works by telling a person that he has no time that day to learn Torah or mend his ways. "Tomorrow will be good enough," he says.

But the next day comes, and the *yetzer hara* says the same thing. And so it goes throughout a person's life. This is why the Torah warns us, '***this day***'. Start today and do not push it off until tomorrow.



Sweet Hasmadah

וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וּלְבֵיתֶךָ You shall be happy with all the goodness that Hashem your G-d gave you. (*Devarim* 26:11)

There is a fundamental point here regarding the goodness of Torah. **The *Ohr Hachayim*** comments: "***You shall be happy with all the goodness" – If people would sense the sweetness and pleasure of***

the Torah's goodness, they would run after it like they were crazy, and a world's full of gold and silver would be like nothing to them". [*Ohr Hachayim* commentary on *Devarim* 26:11.]

The Chazon Ish wrote something similar, in a letter:

The "marriage match" between wisdom and the person cannot be attained without longing and appetite. The words of Torah are beloved – and the power of love opens the mind and the heart to swallow wisdom, understanding and knowledge."

They said about R. Yochanan, "'If a man would give all the wealth of his house for the love" with which R. Yochanan loved the Torah, he would be despised."

The Chazon Ish is saying that if a person loves Torah, he will constantly learn it, and it will also become engraved upon his heart.

It is written: **בְּחֻקֹּתֶיךָ אֶשְׁתַּעֲשָׁע לֹא אֶשְׁכַּח דְּבָרֶךָ** – ***I will take pleasure in Your laws; I will not forget Your words***. (*Tehillim* 119:16.)

The Radak explains this *pasuk* to mean that "when I look into words of Torah, I take pleasure in them, and that is why I don't forget them; because they are my joy and delight."

The Radak added that the opposite is true, as well. If a person finds learning hard and heavy, in the end he won't be able to learn.

Why was **the Vilna Gaon** able to learn with such great *hasmadah,* for so many hours on end, while we get tired out after half an hour of learning a *daf Gemara?*

It's because the Torah is not sweet to us like it was to the Vilna Gaon. So we find the learning hard, and it tires us out.

The only way to solve the problem is to get to the place where learning is sweet and enjoyable.

Anyone can pick up a newspaper or a book of stories about *tzaddikim* and just read and read without break, not even noticing that half the night passed by, and it is already 2:30 AM. Similarly, anyone can

walk around all day with a candy in his mouth and not get tired out from it.

But with the Torah it is different. In the beginning it is bitter, and in the end it is sweet. *Emunah* in *Hashem,* and internally recognizing that Torah learning is attachment to *Hashem,* engendered in the hearts of the Gedolim of the generations a strong desire for Torah and a tremendous sweetness in every word of Torah they learned. This sweetness enabled them to learn with such great *hasmadah.*

But how does a person get to this sweetness and pleasure in Torah learning?

נֶפֶשׁ שְׂבֵעָה תָּבוּס נֹפֶת וְנֶפֶשׁ רְעֵבָה כָּל־מַר מָתוֹק A sated soul will trample the sweetest of things, and to a hungry soul, everything bitter is sweet. (*Mishlei* 27:7)

The *Vilna Gaon* explains as follows: When a person doesn't have desire for Torah study, he doesn't taste its sweetness, and then he "will trample the sweetest of things." But when a person's soul is hungry, when it desires and longs to be engaged in Torah learning, even "everything bitter is sweet," because he worked very hard in it and pained himself over it.

Putting effort into Torah learning brings the learner to a tremendous longing for Torah, to the point that even bitter things taste sweet to him. The pleasantness he experiences becomes a wondrous tool to increase his *hasmadah* in learning.

He will gradually grow more and more attached to Torah, and will thus feel its pleasantness in a most wondrous way. As the *Tanna* says: ***רבי נתן אומר אין לך אהבה כאהבה של תורה 'There is no love like the love of Torah***'. (*Avos d'Rabbi Nasan* 28:1.)

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]



Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l was known to urge people to notice and express appreciation to Hashem for all the good that Hashem does. If one would stop to think for a moment, one could think of so many reasons to thank Hashem.

Thank you, Hashem, that I am alive. Thank you, Hashem, that I have food to eat. Thank you, Hashem, for a comfortable bed and warm blanket. Thank you, Hashem, that I am not barred from doing mitzvos. Thank you, Hashem, that I was not involved in the car accident that I had just passed, and many, many more reasons to thank Hashem.

There is a mitzvah of bikurim, of bringing the first fruits from each of the 7 special fruits grown in the Land of Israel, to Yerushalayim. There, they are presented to the kohanim in the Beis HaMikdash. The procedure and procession were very elaborate.

When the people bringing the bikurim passed through different cities on the way to Yerushalayim, the city dwellers came to greet them. Even workers would pause their work to greet those who were bringing bikurim.

The Alshich says that normally a worker is forbidden to stop his work, even just to give a greeting, because the time lost would be considered stealing from his boss. If so, what is so special about this mitzvah of bikurim that halacha requires the Jewish workers to stop working for a short while, to greet those Jews bringing bikurim?

The Midrash states that the world was created for the sake of that which is called "Reishis" [first]: The world was created for the sake

of the nation of Israel who is called "Reishis". Likewise, the world was created for the sake of Torah, which is called "Reishis". Finally, the world was created for the sake of the mitzvah of bikkurim, which is called "Reishis".

The Alshich asks what is so special about this mitzvah of bringing bikurim that it was given as a reason for the creation of the world?

The Alshich answers that the mitzvah of bikkurim contains within it something that is fundamental to being a human being — the obligation for people to express their gratitude, their hakaras haTov.

HaKaras haTov is so necessary and vital that the whole world's creation was actualized just for this mitzvah, which teaches us and trains us in the attribute of gratitude. The obligation to show appreciation to Hashem is one of the basic tenets of serving Hashem.

Hashem gives us life, food, and EVERYTHING!! ALL that we have is from Hashem! We must constantly think about and appreciate that. - This mitzvah is so special that even workers must stop working for a short while to participate in it.

Whenever **Rabbi Yaakov Neiman zt"l** visited Radin, the **Chofetz Chaim zt"l** would trouble himself to arrange lodging for him. Why?

Rabbi Neiman explained that the Chofetz Chaim had to periodically travel to Warsaw to deal with the publishing of his sefarim. In Warsaw, the Chofetz Chaim used to stay in the home of Rabbi Neiman's wife's grandfather. The Chofetz Chaim felt an obligation of hakaras tov, appreciation, to his host. Therefore, he wanted to, likewise, help the man's grandchild.

We see the extent of the obligation to feel hakaras tov. Even though the Chofetz Chaim's presence in the grandfather's house was an honour for the grandfather, the Chofetz Chaim still felt an obligation to show appreciation to his grandchildren.

From the actions of **Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l** we see the extent of the obligation to show appreciation. One of Rabbi Meltzer's illustrious students invited him to his son's bar mitzvah that would be taking place on Shabbos. He invited him as a sign of respect but did not expect Rabbi Meltzer to walk the long distance and up four steep flights of stairs to his home.

In the middle of the bar mitzvah, Rabbi Meltzer appeared. Everyone was shocked that he had come. Rabbi Meltzer said that he felt obligated to come because of hakaras hatov.

What favour had been done for him that he felt obligated to reciprocate?

When Rabbi Meltzer had seen the invitation, he had a flashback to his student's wedding. It seemed as if the wedding had recently taken place, yet now he had a son of bar mitzvah age. Rabbi Meltzer said that this thought made him realize that time flies so quickly. Therefore, he felt that he must immediately do teshuvah while he still could, while he was still alive. Since this occasion inspired Rabbi Meltzer to do teshuvah, he felt obligated to show appreciation to his student. Therefore, he came to the bar mitzvah.

Hakaras HaTov is so fundamental that a person is only considered a mentsch when he appreciates all the many favours that Hashem does. No matter what the state of our life is, we are so indebted to Hashem for life itself!

We must stop to think and show appreciation for all the kindness that others do for us. When we give the proper appreciation to others, for the favours that they do, then we can begin to properly appreciate all that Hashem does for us.

"The world is a place of constant tests, and in each one lies the opportunity for greatness." ~ Rav Yerucham Levovitz.



Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

(כו:ג) וּבָאתָ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם *'You shall come to the Kohein that will be in those days.'* (26:3)

Rashi: **אֵין לְךָ אֶלָּא כֹּהֵן שֶׁבְּיָמֶיךָ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהוּא** - ***You have none but the Kohen in your days.***

It is told about the **Chofetz Chaim** that one Shabbos he hosted **HaGaon Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin**. After Davening they both sat down at the table, and after they partook of a little wine and some cake, Rav Meir Shapiro asked his host to say a Dvar Torah, but the Chofetz Chaim responded that he did not feel so well and he could not say anything.

Rav Shapiro leaned over to the man sitting next to him and said: "on the Posuk of 'And you shall come to the Kohein', Rashi Ha'kadosh states: 'You have none but the Kohein in your days'."

The indirect teaching of Rav Meir made a lasting impression on the Chofetz Chaim, and it was known that he was a Kohein, and that morning he strengthened himself from his weakness, and he began to say a long discourse of Torah to the benefit of all those sitting there. (**Siach Aharon**)

"The essence of love is giving. We love those to whom we give, because we have placed part of ourselves within them." ~ Rav Dessler.

Working on our Middos



Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, zt"l, the Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, lived in the world of Hashem's Mitzvos, not in the world bound by time constraints. One of the Rosh Yeshuvah's attendants, Mr. Herzog, recalls being in Austria one summer with Rav Yehuda Zev, and traveling with him to Zurich on the way back, to see Talmidim there. He said: We Davened Minchah, and then the Rosh Yeshivah gave Brachos to many Talmidim who visited with their families. Then someone told him that Rav Moshe Soloveitchik was making a Vort that night. His daughter was getting engaged to the son of the Chevroner Rosh Yeshivah.

Rav Yehuda Zev, who was very close to Rav Soloveitchik, said, "We have to go wish him 'Mazel Tov.'"

I told him that we would miss our flight, but the Rosh Yeshivah was insistent. He felt that if he was in town on the day of the Simchah, he couldn't not go and wish a 'Mazel Tov'.

We went, and by the time we left there, it was almost six o' clock. We knew it was too late to make the flight, so we suggested that maybe we should stay overnight and go back to Manchester the next day. But Rav Yehuda Zev said, "No, tonight is Rosh Chodesh Elul, and I have to be back in Yeshivah."

So we headed to the airport, even though we knew it was much too late. I ran ahead to the gate and I said to the clerk, "Please, the Rabbi is coming. Can you hold the flight?"

They looked at me and said, "The flight has been delayed an hour and a half. He didn't miss it yet!"

Rav Yehuda Zev was walking slowly into the airport. I had a big grin as I updated him that we didn't miss our flight. The Rosh Yeshivah gave me a look and said, "Why would Hashem make me miss the flight if I'm busy with Mitzvos?"

Then, he realized that we still had an hour until the plane would leave and he said, "We haven't learned Mussar yet today. Come, let's learn some Mussar while we wait!"



For the Shabbos Table

בָּרוּךְ פִּרְיִ־בִטְנְךָ וּפְרִי אַדְמָתְךָ וּפְרִי בְהֶמְתֶּךָ שְׁגַר אֲלָפֶיךָ וְעַשְׁתְּרוֹת צֹאנֶךָ "***Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your animals***…." (Devarim 28:4)

In describing the berachos granted to one who adheres to the mitzvos, the Torah refers to children as "the fruit of your womb."

Why doesn't the Torah use a simpler term, such as "children" or "offspring?"

Furthermore, the pasuk lists this blessing along with having successful livestock and crops. Surely blessed offspring are far more precious. So why does the Torah juxtapose them?

Even the most fertile of fields and hardy livestock cannot thrive on their own. The farmer must be thoroughly involved in nurturing and protecting his assets to ensure their success. Likewise, our most precious "fruit," our children, need our continuous care to thrive.

The Torah is subtly teaching us that just as it takes time and effort to be blessed with material success, our children as well require our time and our effort, with Hashem's blessing, to blossom and grow.

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

Rav Yehonasan Eybeshutz *ztz"l* (1690-1764, 21st of Elul)

Rav Eybeshutz was born in Cracow, Poland. At the age of 21 he became the Rosh Yeshiva of the Prague yeshiva. He authored many works in areas of halacha as well as kabbalah. Thirty of his works in the area of halacha have been published. His works include *Urim V'tumim*, *Kereisi Ufleisi*, *Yaaros Dvash*, and *Ahavas Yehonasan* (a commentary on the weekly haftorahs). Rav Eybeshutz is also famous for writing *kameyos* (amulets with holy writings) for women who were soon to give birth.

Devar Torah on the Parsha from Rav Eybeshutz

תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב מֵרֹב כֹּל - Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with joy and with a good heart, while you had abundance of everything. -- Devorim 28:47

In *Ya'aros D'vash* (part 1, *drush* 11) Rav Eybeshutz expounds on this verse, and in the name of the **Arizal**, Rav Eybeshutz writes that each Jew needs to have joy when doing any mitzva. Rav Eybeshutz then gives an advice of how to reach that joy:

Before the performance of a mitzva think how it is such an incredible honour that the Master of the Universe asked you personally to do this action for Him.

"Bitachon does not mean believing everything will turn out as we wish, but knowing that whatever Hashem does is the greatest good. This certainty brings a quiet joy that no circumstance can disturb." ~ Chazon Ish.

Start your day the TorahWay דרך התורה



Avodas Hashem B'Simcha - Rabbi Moshe Kupetz ZT"L

In the **תוכחה**, the Torah says that the terrible **קללות** come **תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב** —because Hashem was not served with joy. This seems difficult to understand. If a person kept **תורה ומצוות**, why should the lack of **שמחה** bring such severe consequences?

Several approaches help explain this.

1. Enjoying the Aveirah

The **מפרשים** explain the **משנה**, "**שכר מצוה מצוה, ושכר עבירה עבירה**." The pleasure one derives from a **מצוה** is itself another **מצוה**, while enjoyment taken from an **עבירה** becomes an additional **עבירה**.

According to this approach, the **פסוק** means that not only did a person fail to serve Hashem properly, but he was actually happy and satisfied with that failure. Making mistakes is human, but taking pride in wrongdoing is far more serious. This was the difference between the **חטא העגל** and the dancing around it. The sin itself was terrible, but rejoicing in it broke the **לוחות**.

2. Where Does Your Simcha Come From?

The **משך חכמה** explains that everyone needs joy in life. The question is: where do we seek it?

One person finds happiness in **תורה, תפילה, חסד** and **עבודת ה'**. Another finds happiness only in business success, wealth and material achievement.

The **פסוק** can therefore be read:

"**לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה**"—you did not derive joy from **עבודת ה'**.

"**מרב כל**"—instead, your joy came only from material abundance.

When spirituality brings no pleasure, but worldly success does, something fundamental is missing.

3. Simcha That Can Be Passed On

Rav Moshe Feinstein explained another **פסוק**:

"**ובחרת בחיים למען תחיה אתה וזרעך**."

Why does the Torah add "**וזרעך**"? If I choose life, my children can choose it as well.

Rav Moshe explained that the Torah is teaching us to choose a form of **יהדות** that can be transmitted to the next generation.

Many immigrants who arrived in America struggled greatly to remain observant. The message their children often heard was:

"**עס איז שווער צו זיין א איד**."

Judaism was presented as hardship and sacrifice rather than privilege and joy. As a result, many children drifted away.

The Torah therefore says: choose a **חיים** that will inspire both **אתה וזרעך**. Live Yiddishkeit in a way that your children will want to continue it.

With this understanding, "**תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה**" takes on new meaning. Even if a person kept the **מצוות**, if the joy was absent, the Yiddishkeit may not be transmitted to the next generation.

Patching On Simcha

At the end of **פרשת חוקת**, Moshe Rabbeinu feared Og Melech HaBashan because Og had once informed Avraham Avinu that Lot

had been captured. Although Og's motives were selfish, the act ultimately led to a great **קידוש ה'**.

Rav Moshe Feinstein explains the idea of "**מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה**." Sometimes a person performs a **מצוה** for imperfect reasons, but later can attach proper intentions to that deed through reflection and **תשובה**.

If a person can add **לשמה** afterwards, perhaps he can also add **שמחה** afterwards.

When preparing for **ימים נוראים**, we do not only do **תשובה** for **עבירות**. We also examine our **מצוות**:

- Did we perform them properly?
- Did we do them **לשמה**?
- Did we do them **בשמחה**?

We can ask Hashem to elevate those **מצוות** and bring them to their proper perfection.

The Role of Grandparents

Sometimes parents, overwhelmed by life's responsibilities, struggle to convey the joy of Yiddishkeit. But the opportunity is not lost.

The Torah says: "**למען תספר באזני בנך ובן בנך**."

Children and grandchildren relate differently to parents and grandparents. A grandparent often has the ability to show unconditional love and warmth. Through that relationship, grandchildren can experience the beauty, happiness and pride of being a Yid.

Even if the message of **שמחה** was not fully communicated earlier, it can still be passed on later.

Why Teshuvah Comes First

We say: **ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה**

Why is **תשובה** always listed first?

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein told a **משל**: A French nobleman tasted kishke in Russia and loved it. He sent his cook to learn the recipe. The cook carefully copied every ingredient and prepared it back in Paris, but the result smelled terrible and was inedible.

When he returned to Russia, the chef asked him:

"Did you clean out the kishke before filling it?"

"That wasn't in the recipe!"

The problem was obvious. All the finest ingredients had been placed into an unclean container.

So too, a person may come before Hashem with **תפילה**, but if the mouth speaking those words has just been used for **לשון הרע, רכילות** or other improper speech, the **תפילה** cannot have its full effect.

First comes **תשובה**. We cleanse the vessel. Then **תפילה** and **צדקה** can accomplish what they are meant to accomplish.

As we approach the **ימים נוראים**, we should strive not only to perform **מצוות**, but to perform them **בשמחה ובטוב לבב**. That joy enriches our own **עבודת ה'** , and ensures that the beauty of **תורה** and **מצוות** is passed on to future generations.

May we all merit a **כתיבה וחתימה טובה**, a **גוט געבענטשט יאר**, and every blessing we need. **אמן**.

"Shabbos is a day of ecstasy that has aspects of the afterlife. Every person who observes Shabbos properly will be able to experience an intense spiritual pleasure. With this we receive a taste of the reward of Olam Habbah, the eternal world, the world that is a complete Shabbos." ~ R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev Ztl (1740-1809).

Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Ki Savo opens with the directive for each person to bring of their first fruits to the Bais HaMikdash as Bikurim (26:2).

There is no specific amount mentioned that should be given, and one can simply bring a kernel of wheat and fulfil this obligation.

Rav Shimon Sofer explains that the reason there is no limit is to test each person. After someone toils and invests so much time and effort to reap these fruits, will he still recognize that everything he has comes from Hashem, or will he be deluded to think that his own efforts bore this fruit?

His Bikurim gift will show how much recognition he has of the real Provider, Hashem.



וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ ה' (כו/יא)

[You shall rejoice with all the good that Hashem has given you]

The **אור החיים הקדוש** writes on these words: GOOD refers to **תורה**, and if man would sense the sweetness and delight of **תורה** he would go crazy in pursuing after the **תורה**. And all the gold and silver would be worthless in his eyes compared to the **תורה** which encompasses all that is good.

It was a cold and snowy day in **ירושלים**, and Rav Dovid Finkel decided to visit the **Brisker Rav**. He assumed that he would be able to spend plenty of time with the rov because no one else would venture out in the snow. When he reached the Brisker Rav's street, he spotted a lone figure dancing in the snow.

As he drew closer to the Rav's home, he saw the person dancing was none other than **Rav Shach זצ"ל**. Rav Finkel approached Rav Shach

and asked him why he was dancing. Rav Shach responded, "when I leave the Brisker Rav's house, I am so filled with joy from hearing his chiddushim that I want to dance. I am usually embarrassed by the passersby to actually dance, but today no one was around, so I felt free to express my joy"

Sometimes we wonder why we don't feel the sweetness of the **תורה**. **The Dubno Maggid** explains it with the following.

There was a poor man who had a rich relative, this rich relative was soon to marry off his child and the **חתונה** was the talk of town. The best caterers were brought from the big city and no corners were cut. The poor man decided that it would be a shame to have a half full stomach, so he decided to fast for two days before the **חתונה**.

Finally, the big day arrived, and he was waiting for a servant from the rich man's household to invite him to the **חתונה**. He saw the servants hurrying to his neighbours and inviting them but he was left out. As the time drew closer, he realized that his dream had been dashed, and he will not be invited after all.

As he had been fasting for two days he asked his wife for some supper. She brought out some black bread with lots of onions and radishes, and he tucks in. Just as he finished eating, there was a knock on his door. "We are so sorry. We forgot to invite you. Your cousin really wants you to be at the **חתונה**, please come now."

The servants bring him to the hall, sit him down and serve him sweet roast duck. He takes a bite and it tastes a little strange because of the taste of onions and radishes still in his mouth. The same happened with all that he tried. He took one spoon of soup and it tasted sharp. The expensive meat tasted bitter. He did not even try to eat any more of this distasteful food.

The next day he heard a group of people who were at the **חתונה**, discussing how delicious and tasty the food of the **חתונה** was, one commented, "It was the best food I have ever tasted."

The poor man interrupted, "Stop joking! I was there and I ate from the food, it was all bitter. Is that what you call delicious food!" They were all shocked to hear that, until one of them asked him, "Tell me, what did you eat before you came to the **חתונה**?"

"Lots of onions and radishes," replied the poor man. "Well that explains it all: you still had the sharp and bitter taste of onions and radishes in your mouth and breath, that is why you could not appreciates the delicious tastes.

So too, says the Dubno Maggid if we fill ourselves with the bitter pleasures and desires of **עולם הזה**, of course we cannot fully appreciate the **גשמעק** of **תורה**. (**משלי יעקב/פקודי/ משל קלט**)

Torah Gems

לֹא־עָבַרְתִּי מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ וְלֹא שָׁכָחְתִּי - *I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten [them].* (26:13)

Why does the person who is taking Ma'aser have to declare **ולא שכחתי** - I have not forgotten; When a person is in the midst of fulfilling a Mitzvah, he certainly does not forget it?

The Sefas Emes Zt'l says, that a person can forget a Mitzvah even while physically doing it. Because if the Mitzvah is done without concentration, but out of habit, it can easily be forgotten, even though outwardly it appears to be fulfilled. This is because the heart and the mind are concentrating on other issues at the time.

That is why one declares **ולא עברתי ממצותיך** - I have not transgressed - I took ma'aser according to the law, **ולא שכחתי** - I have not forgotten - I did not turn my thoughts away from the Mitzvah and I did it with all my thoughts concentrated to be in the name of Hashem.



שלמה המלך says **מות וחיים ביד הלשון**. The words that we say have the power and the ability to create **מות וחיים**, life and death. Simply understood to mean the effect that what I say can have on other people. I can encourage people, I can discourage people, I can kill people, I can destroy a **שידוך**.

מות וחיים ביד הלשון. The **חפץ חיים** says though that **מות וחיים ביד הלשון** is referring to my own life. My own life and death, my own future is dependent on what I do and don't say. I want to share with the **נצור** audience a story which I heard from a **ייד** by the name of Seymour Kaplan.

He worked in the US Navy in the Second World War and he was in a submarine. They were attacking the Japanese fleet of aircraft carriers and the Japanese ships caught sight of their submarine and were desperate to find them. They were dropping different areas of sonar which is using acoustics to try to find where there's a submarine below the surface of the ocean and then drop depth charges and destroy the submarine. On the other hand, they were out to try and torpedo the very same Japanese aircraft carrier, Shokaku it was called, one of the greatest carriers that there were that existed in Second World War.

And they didn't know exactly the power of the sonar equipment that the Japanese had and they were extremely worried that any noise that the submarine might emit would be picked up by the Japanese. These soldiers inside the submarine of the United States sat there for twenty full hours while the Japanese were searching and searching with sonar equipment, try to find any noise coming from

their submarine. And the commander told them there's no talking whatsoever for the next twenty hours because our lives are dependent on the fact that no noise whatever should come from our submarine. The smallest little bit of noise and that's the end of us.



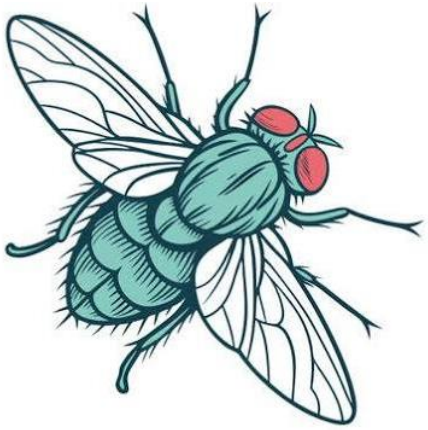
And after twenty hours, the Japanese decided that the submarine must have disappeared, they stopped searching for them and lo and behold, the US submarine managed to torpedo and then sink the Japanese aircraft carrier. And he described to me, Seymour Kaplan, the feelings of what it was like to realize that **המות וחיים ביד הלשון**, any word that we might whisper is going to be picked up and it's going to bring about our downfall. We're going to be killed for it, says the **חפץ חיים**.

המות וחיים ביד הלשון, before you open your mouth, be careful, realize what's at stake, realize that my whole future, my whole life, there's a **כח** out there which could destroy me with a depth charge if I say the wrong word.

What we need to learn from here is we have the opportunity, we can create **חיים**, we can create **מות** for ourselves and for others, and it's all dependent on having the **כח** to control what we say.

'How do we know that a sin has been forgiven in Heaven? When one no longer repeats it!' ~ R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischah ZT'L

The fly - R' Yisrael Rot



One Shabbos night, a man came to the *Beis HaMedrash* of the Gerrer Rebbe and sat near the Rebbe at the *tish*.

A fly began to bother him. He waved it away, but it returned to sit on his forehead. He waved again — it returned again. Again and again he sent it away but it kept returning.

The *chossid's* frustration grew, and finally he struck it hard on the table, killing it.

He immediately panicked — he had just done a *melachah* on Shabbos, killing a living creature, and in public! All the *chassidim* saw… perhaps even the Rebbe saw… How could he continue living with such shame?

After a short time, it became clear that the fly had not died. It twitched… moved… lifted slightly… fell… and finally spread its wings and flew away. *Boruch* Hashem — he had not violated Shabbos after all.

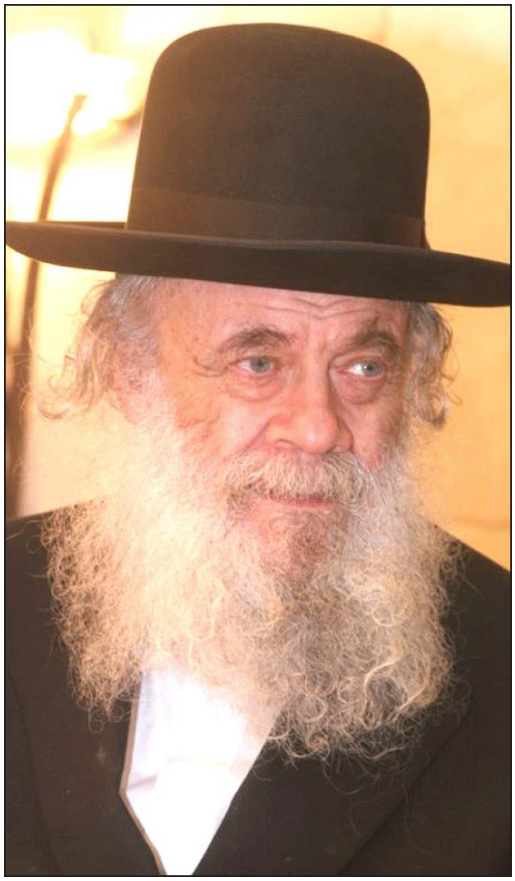
Suddenly, silence fell over the room. The Rebbe signaled that he wished to speak. Everyone leaned in.

The Rebbe said: *Chazal* say the *yetzer hara* is like a fly. What is the comparison?

Even if you think you struck it dead — you are mistaken. It is not dead. It is still alive. Perhaps wounded, perhaps weakened — but soon it recovers, stands up, and returns with full strength.

Do not open even the smallest entrance to the *yetzer hara*. And even when you think the *yetzer hara* is gone — know that it is not. It changes colors, forms, and strategies. It waits for any opening. If we remain vigilant, Hashem will help us and protect us from the *yetzer hara*.

Jolting Joke



R' Avrohom Genechovsky would say that a person can solve all the world's problems with a good joke. Whenever he sensed tension between people, he would lighten the mood with a well-timed joke, transforming the atmosphere and helping everyone relax.

He would cite the pasuk, **כִּי בְשִׂמְחָה תֵּצֵאוּ** , in joy you shall go out, explaining that joy has the power to free a person from life's troubles. A cheerful spirit can dissolve tension, lift burdens, and open the way to overcoming difficulties.

R' Nachum Shadiker was negotiating with someone on a business deal when suddenly the man began to shout at him.

R' Nachum calmy said, "Don't shout. Someone might think that you are angry with me."

With this joke the squabble faded.

Torah Gems

תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל וגו' (כח-מז)

The Torah warns us that all the curses that are mentioned in this parsha are a result "Because you did not serve Hashem with joy and a good heart." To serve G-d with ultimate simcha - joy, requires a higher degree of spirituality not readily achievable by everyone. Why, then, does the Torah inflict such harsh punishment for failure

to achieve this lofty level? Is it not unrealistic to hold everyone to so high a standard?

R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk ZT"L answers by punctuating the above posuk just a bit differently, inserting a comma before the word "**בשמחה**" - "with joy".

The verse is now understood differently: The curses and punishments will occur **because** you did not serve Hashem - ***and rejoiced in not serving him!***

If a person is saddened by his dereliction in fulfilling the Torah and aspires to improve himself, he can be forgiven. However, if one can possibly be happy with the fact that he is defying the Divine will - that is unforgivable.



I'd like to share with you a story about my **רבי רב שמואל קמינצקי שליטא**. A few years ago, the **ראש ישיבה רב שמואל** went to **מנחם אבל** somebody who was sitting **שבעה**, and a fellow sees him walking into the **בית אבל** and calls out to him, "I know you are!" And he addressed **שמואל** by name without saying **רב**, "and I'm not going to say **רב**."

It was a tense moment in the **בית אבל**. How could it be some man would get up and have the **חוצפה**, the audacity to yell at **רב שמואל**, the **ראש ישיבה רב שמואל**, address him by name without saying **רב** first? It was a tense moment; no one knew where to put themselves.

Apparently, this fellow was a man who had learned as a **בחור** in the Philadelphia **ישיבה**, and for reasons that are unknown to us but apparently, he had done certain things that were as such that the **ראש ישיבה רב שמואל** had to dismiss him from the **ישיבה** and ask him to go learn elsewhere.

The man did not get over it, and this was his chance to publicly be **מבזה** one of the **גדולי הדור**.

רב שמואל in the nick of the moment turns to him and says, "**אוודאי ניט**, for sure not, you don't have to address me as **רב**. **מיר זענען דאך ידידים**, we're friends, and with **ידידים** with friends, you don't have to say **רב**."

At that moment everyone calmed down. The **ראש ישיבה** on the spur of the moment found a way to diffuse the tensest situation that was going on in this **בית אבל**.

A few years ago, somebody asked **רב שמואל**, "How are you **זוכה** to such **אריכות ימים** like the **גמרא** talks about with many **אמוראים**, **במה הארכת ימים**? How are you **זוכה** to **אריכות ימים**?"

The **ראש ישיבה קיינאהרע** is over a hundred years old, to which **רב שמואל** answered, "**אין אלע די יארן**, in all the years, I never got angry at anybody."

We see how much we can do by staying calm. The **גמרא** says, **כל הכועס**, anyone who gets angry, he goes to **גיהנום** and also **תחתיות שולטים בו**. He has physical illness that takes place. Somebody who stays calm, see how much you can do to diffuse the tensest moment.

Sometimes it can be an instance when someone can be **מבזה** you and embarrass you in public in the most inappropriate fashion, but whatever it is, it's not going to be worse than what happened over here with the **ראש ישיבה רב שמואל**.

And you see what you can do by holding your words, hold your words back, guard your tongue, be careful what you do answer, what you

don't answer, to make such an impact. It can make an impact to help others in this world, and it can make an impact in the **עולם האמת**.



It's Never Too Late To Come Home by Rabbi YY Rubinstein

Rabbi YY Rubinstein was once giving a shiur in London when he met a Jewish man who began asking him questions about Manchester. "Where in Manchester do you live?" "Do you happen to know so-and-so?"

Rabbi Rubinstein did know him. As the conversation continued, however, something seemed strange. The man was asking very basic questions about this person - questions that someone close to him should have known.

Then Rabbi Rubinstein discovered why. The man he was asking about was his own son. Yet the father didn't even seem to know much about his son's family.

Rabbi Rubinstein finally asked him: "How is it that you don't even know how many grandchildren you have?"

Years earlier, the man's son had gone off the derech. It had been enormously painful for the father. Eventually, during an argument, the father lost his temper. In a moment of anger, he shouted words that would change both of their lives: "Get out! And never come back again!" The son left. And he didn't come back.

A year passed. Then five. Then ten. Seventeen years passed. During those seventeen years, the son grew from a young man into an adult. He married. He built a family. He had three children. And his own father barely knew his grandchildren. One explosion of anger had become seventeen years of silence.

Rabbi Rubinstein looked at the father. "I think your son would like to see you again."

The father immediately resisted. "No, no. It's been too long."

Then he said the words people so often use when they believe something can no longer be repaired: "Too much water has flowed under the bridge." After seventeen years, what was there left to say? How could they possibly undo everything that had happened?

Rabbi Rubinstein didn't argue with him. Instead, he asked for the father's address and telephone number. "I'll keep you updated. I'll let you know how your family is doing."

The next day, Rabbi Rubinstein returned to Manchester. And, as he describes it, by "coincidence," he happened to bump into the man's son. It was, perhaps, a somewhat intentional coincidence.

Rabbi Rubinstein approached him. "I was in London yesterday, and somebody who knows you very well was asking about you."

"Who?"

"Your father."

Immediately, the son wanted to know how his father was doing.

"He's fine," Rabbi Rubinstein told him. "But I think he'd be doing a lot better if he were able to see his son again."

The son hesitated. And then, remarkably, he gave essentially the same response his father had given. "Too much water has flowed under the bridge."

Father and son were miles apart. But they were thinking exactly the same thing. They both wanted to know about each other. And they both believed it was too late to come back.

Rabbi Rubinstein wasn't prepared to accept that. "By coincidence," he told the son, "I'm going back to London tomorrow. How about I take you to see your father?"

The son hesitated. "That's it. I'm picking you up at ten o'clock."

Rabbi Rubinstein contacted the father and made sure he would be home. The next day, he picked up the son and drove him to London.

This wasn't the young boy who had left his father's home seventeen years earlier. He was now a grown man - a husband and a father of three children. But as they approached his father's front door, he became almost like a frightened child again. He was so nervous that he couldn't even bring himself to ring the bell. Rabbi Rubinstein had to do it for him. He pressed the doorbell. Nothing happened. He pressed it again.

For a moment, Rabbi Rubinstein began worrying that perhaps the father wasn't home after all. Then they heard footsteps. Someone approached the door. The door opened. And there stood a father looking at the son he had not seen for seventeen years.

The father began crying. Tears streamed down his cheeks. Rabbi Rubinstein began crying. And the son stood there crying as well. Seventeen years of anger. Seventeen years of silence. Seventeen years of missed birthdays, Yomim Tovim, family occasions and ordinary moments that could never be recovered.

Father and son simply stared at each other. Then the son did something very small. He took one step toward his father.

The moment the son stepped forward, his father rushed out of the house. He grabbed his son. And wrapped his arms around him. After seventeen years - a father was holding his son again. They went inside together.

Rabbi Rubinstein realized that his job was finished. As he later described it, he had become "wonderfully redundant." There was no need for him to mediate their conversation. No need to explain seventeen years of history. No need to tell either of them what to say. The door had opened. The father and son were together.

"I'll be back in three hours," Rabbi Rubinstein told them.

Three hours later, he returned to take the son back to Manchester. But those three hours changed everything.

The reconciliation wasn't temporary. Within approximately six months, the son made an extraordinary decision. He sold his business. He sold his home. And he moved his entire family to London. So that his children could grow up knowing their Zeidy.

For seventeen years, father and son had convinced themselves that their relationship was beyond repair. "Too much water has flowed under the bridge." Yet only six months after that front door opened, the grandchildren were living near their grandfather. What both men had considered impossible had been waiting on the other side of one step.

And sometimes a Jew looks at his own relationship with Hashem and makes exactly the same mistake. It's been too long. I've done too much. I've failed too many times. I've been away for too many years. There's too much water under the bridge.

But there is something we must never forget. Avinu Malkeinu We call Hashem: Avinu Malkeinu - our Father, our King. He is our King. But He is also our Father. And a child can always come home.

The son in Rabbi Rubinstein's story didn't deliver a speech at the front door. He didn't explain seventeen years. He didn't erase the past. He didn't even know what to say. He simply took one step toward his father. And what did his father do? His father ran toward him. He embraced him. He brought him inside.

That image contains the entire lesson. Sometimes we believe that before we can return to Hashem, we first need to fix ourselves. We need to become worthy. We need to repair everything. We need to somehow erase the past. But perhaps Hashem is simply waiting for us to take that first step toward the door. One sincere tefillah. One mitzvah. One moment of regret. One decision to change.

"Hashem, I want to come back." And the distance that seemed impossible to cross can suddenly begin disappearing.

Rabbi Rubinstein's message is that we must never allow yiush to convince us that the door is permanently closed. There is no amount of distance that makes returning meaningless. There is no past that prevents a person from taking a new step today. There is nothing you can do that Hashem cannot forgive. Maybe the relationship has been broken for years. It can still heal. Maybe you've been far away. You can still return. Maybe you are standing outside the door and don't even know what you're supposed to say. You don't need to know. Just take the first step. Because sometimes, on the other side of that door - your Father is waiting to embrace you. - **It's never too late to come home**.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - He Placed a Chocolate Coin in the Tzedakah Box

This story happened in New York, to a precious Yid.



Before every tefillah, this precious fellow is careful to prepare a few dollars for tzedakah, as Chazal explain on the passuk in Tehillim (17:15), **וַאֲנִי בְּצֶדֶק אֶחֱזֶה פָנֶיךָ** —in the merit of Tzedek (tzedakah), one is zocheh that his tefillah is accepted.

So, on a regular day, he would put a few dollars in his pocket for tzedakah. One day, not too long ago, he was davening in a huge shul where several minyanim take place at once, when in the middle of davening,

the gabbai came around with a pushkah to collect tzedakah. As soon as he saw the gabbai, he reached into his pocket for a dollar, as this was his daily minhag. He reached into one pocket—and couldn't find so much as a coin. Then, he tried his other pocket—still nothing. His jacket pocket. Nothing.

This was the first time that he'd forgotten to put aside money for tzedakah.

He felt terrible. How could he miss his daily practice? He searched his pockets once more—and pulled out a small chocolate coin. The gabbai saw how hard he was trying and smiled. "Reb Yid," he said, "you clearly want to give something. If that's what you have—put it in."

The man felt somewhat uncomfortable, but he dropped the chocolate coin into the pushkah.

A few days later, the gabbai came over to him. "Reb Yid, you wouldn't believe what happened with the chocolate coin you gave to tzedakah. During one of the tefillos, one of the mispallelim suddenly collapsed. Everyone ran to help him, and they quickly realized that the man had had a sugar crash. He has diabetes, and his sugar level had suddenly dropped. He needed something sweet immediately to save his life.

"They ran to the coffee room to get sugar—but just then, there wasn't a speck of sugar in the whole place. The containers were empty.

"The man was already showing signs of serious distress—when, suddenly, I remembered your chocolate coin. I ran to get it, and we put it in his mouth. Within seconds, he calmed down and regained consciousness. A few minutes later, a doctor came to check on him, and he said, 'Know this, if he hadn't received something sweet in his mouth, within five minutes it would have all been over. That chocolate saved his life.'"

"Reb Yid" was deeply moved. And he learned something powerful. Sometimes, a person feels like he has nothing to give to the Ribono Shel Olam. He feels empty of Torah, mitzvos, and maasim tovim. But Hashem doesn't demand too much. If you have even a little to give—give that to Hashem.

Because the Ribono Shel Olam sees the heart, our small offerings are precious and can accomplish great things. Don't say, "Who am I? What am I? I'm not a tzaddik, and I can't fulfill Hashem's rotzon fully." Hashem knows your situation, and He wants whatever you can give.

Shlomo Hamelech says in *Koheles* (9:10): **כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכֹחֲךָ עֲשֵׂה כִּי אֵין מַעֲשֶׂה וְחֶשְׁבּוֹן וְדַעַת וְחָכְמָה בִּשְׁאוֹל אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה הֹלֵךְ שָׁמָּה**. *Whatever your hand attains to do [as long as you are] with your strength, do; for there is neither deed nor reckoning, neither knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, where you are going*."

Shlomo Hamelech is telling us: as long as you're alive in this world of action, do anything you can for Hashem—even the smallest thing. Because in *Shamayim*, your deeds are precious. And once a person leaves this world, he can't do anything anymore. That's why even a weak person should say, "I am mighty."



The Scratch - Rabbi Joey Haber

This happened a number of years ago. At first, in the Syrian community, I started giving shiurim. They were online. We got to know a lot of people. But then, one night, I went somewhere with my wife. I parked my car in Brooklyn, next to Coney Island Avenue, if you know Brooklyn. And you know how it is, sometimes it's hard to park, so it's a tight space. So you put your car, you squeeze the car in front and the car behind, and you get your car in.

So I get my car in, I come back an hour later, I see someone leaning against my car, doesn't look Jewish at all. And I hear him on his

phone say to someone, 'he's coming now.' And I'm looking, who's coming? I'm the only one who's coming. I don't know what he's talking about.



I get close to him, he hangs up the phone. He says, 'do you see what you did?'

I said, 'what did I do?'

He says, 'look, you hit my car.'

I said, 'what are you saying?'

He says, 'I have a brand-new mint condition CL55. It's a Mercedes. Do you know how much it costs?'

'I said, no.'

He says, 'it's a white on black.' And he starts shooting me with curses. 'You don't understand. Look at the scratch you made. Look at the scratch you made.'

And I'm trying to see. I don't see anything. Not like a rabbi can't tell. Like, no, I don't see anything.

He's screaming. He says, 'Torah is your life. My life is this car. My life is this car.'

I'm shaking. I'm not sure what to say.

A man from my community walks by and goes over to the person and says, 'do you know who you're talking to?'

The kid says, 'no, I don't know.'

He says, 'do you realize this story is going to be online in two days.'

After the young man calmed down, he goes, sits into his car. I go over to him. I say, 'listen, I want to tell you two things. Number one, this is Brooklyn, New York. The way we say good morning is we tap your car. And number two, if your car is your life, you're in big trouble.' - And I left.

I told the story all over the place. I told it online. I told it in front of large crowds. Before Yom Kippur, I told it again.

Two days after I made the speech, before Yom Kippur, I get a phone call. I don't recognize the number. I said, 'hi, how are you?'

He says, 'hi. Does CL55 ring a bell?'

I said, 'yeah.'

I said, 'who am I speaking to?'

He says, 'I'm the guy in that car.'

A chill goes down my spine. I'm envisioning he's going to sue me. He's going to put me in jail.

He says, 'I just want to tell you that what you said that day hit me. I'm going to Eretz Yisrael to Yeshiva in two weeks.

Six months later, he calls me back. 'I just made a Siyum on Massechta Kedushim. Two years later, he said, I made a Siyam on a few more Massechtos. I'm getting married and I want you to make a Beracha at my wedding.

I spoke at his Sheva Berachot. Today, he almost finished Shas. Because Torah is awesome.

Rav Shimshon Pincus — Tiferes Shimshon, Ki Savo

"Bikkurim teaches that the first thing a Jew does with the fruits of his labour is to lift his eyes upward and say 'Thank You.' Gratitude is not an emotion — it is the foundation of avodas Hashem. Without hakaras hatov, no mitzvah can stand."

Hashem's Master Plan – Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Many of you know that when I was 21, my father passed away. I'm the oldest of seven. I had to leave the yeshiva. That's when I started supporting my mother and my younger brothers and sisters. But before my father passed away, a few weeks before that, my brother and I were in Washington Heights, and we were in his house, and we prayed in his synagogue, because the hospital where my father was, was not far away.

Now **Rabbi Schwab**, before he came to Washington Heights, he was a teacher in the Israel in Baltimore. And my father was a student of his. So he knew my father. So I was able to stay by Rabbi Schwab. And after Musaf, my brother and I went to see my father. And then we came back to eat the seudah by Rabbi Schwab.

And Rabbi Schwab says to us, how's your father? So I said, I have bitachon, I have faith that he'll be well.

And he got very stern with me, and he taught me a lesson for life. And he said, bitachon, faith in Hashem does not mean that everything is going to happen good, or that everything is going to be well. Bitachon means you have faith in G-d, and even if it's a difficult situation, you understand that G-d has a master plan. Maybe one day you'll understand it.

Bad things happen. It's crazy to say everything is good. Somebody loses a spouse. Somebody gets divorced. Somebody loses a child. You're gonna say that's good? - It's terrible.

But one day we'll understand that Hashem has a master plan. Bitachon means that we have faith in Hashem even though we can't find the Shidduch yet. Even though we don't have the child yet. Even though we don't have the job.

The teshuva that I'm talking about tonight is to learn to accept the difficult situation that you are in right now and not to be angry at Hashem.

To understand that we don't live long enough to understand the master plan. Hopefully everything will work out and that's what we pray for. That things should work out l'tov. But if a person's going through a difficult time, we have to know that Hashem has a master plan. Eventually we'll understand why it was good and why it had to happen. But right now, part of the teshuva is to learn that we are here to give strength to each other. That's why brothers and sisters get together, especially in difficult times. To give strength and courage, and then when we go through and we overcome that difficult time, then we can give chizuk to others.

So that's the teshuva. The teshuva is that no matter what position we are in life, we know that Hashem is testing us, and that we're still going to come pray, and we're still going to daven, and we're still going to do mitzvos, because that's the right thing for a Jew to do. And hopefully Hashem will work out everything so that it should be for our benefit.

They Opened His Grave Three Years Later by R' Jonathan Dagmy

During the early months of COVID, R' Jonathan Dagmy was living in Miami and continuing some of the Chevra Kadisha work he had previously done in New York. It was during that period that an 82-year-old Jewish man named Moshe Melamed passed away. Moshe had a heart condition.

One day, he began experiencing serious cardiac distress and paramedics were called. But this was during the height of the fear and confusion surrounding COVID.

According to the account related by R' Jonathan, the responders were extremely hesitant in treating him, and Moshe died that day. Because of the restrictions at the time, only a small group was able to attend his burial in Miami. And, as was being done then, Moshe's body was placed into a thick sealed plastic bag before burial. In the heat and humidity of Miami, R' Jonathan knew from experience how quickly a body would normally deteriorate under those conditions.

Moshe was buried. And that should have been the end of the story. It wasn't.

About thirty days later, Moshe appeared to his wife, Nina, in a dream. Moshe and Nina had previously purchased burial plots together in Eretz Yisrael. Their intention was that when their time came, they would be buried there. But because of COVID restrictions and the enormous logistical complications of transporting a body internationally, Moshe had been buried in Miami. Now, in the dream, he asked his wife: "Why am I buried in Miami?" He reminded her that their burial plots were in Eretz Yisrael.

Nina woke up. She wasn't sure what to make of it. Then, about a week later, Moshe appeared again. And again, he asked the same question. Why had he been buried in Miami? Why had his body not been brought to Eretz Yisrael?

Nina told their son David, a rabbi in Miami. At first, even he didn't know how seriously to take the dreams. But Moshe kept coming back. Again. And again. And again. The message never changed. His place was supposed to be in Eretz Yisrael.

The family began making inquiries. They spoke to rabbanim. Initially, the response was that moving a body after burial was not something done casually. It was complicated. The matter was put aside. But the dreams did not stop. According to the story, Moshe continued appearing to his wife over the course of approximately two to two-and-a-half years.

Eventually, the family decided they could no longer ignore it. They approached a dayan in Eretz Yisrael and received a halachic ruling permitting the transfer. By the time everything was arranged, approximately three years had passed. Moshe's body was exhumed in Miami. It was prepared for transport. And it was flown to Eretz Yisrael to be buried at Har HaMenuchos.

Moshe's wife, Nina, traveled to Israel for the burial. His son remained in Miami. The family assumed that after three years, the burial would be straightforward. But when the Chevra Kadisha in Jerusalem received the body, something seemed wrong.

The Chevra Kadisha members began moving quickly. The family was confused. Why were they rushing? Moshe had already been buried for three years. Then the Chevra Kadisha said something unexpected. The body was heavy. Far too heavy. After three years underground, especially in Miami's heat and humidity and sealed inside plastic, they expected a very different condition. For a moment, they feared something had gone wrong. Perhaps the bodies had somehow been mixed up during transport. Perhaps this wasn't Moshe. So they stopped. They checked the identification. And then they opened the bag.

There had been no mistake. It was Moshe Melamed. But according to the account related by R' Jonathan, his body was still remarkably intact. His body was complete. His hair remained. There was no smell. There were no worms.

After three years in the ground in Miami, the condition was completely unexpected. R' Jonathan emphasizes that from his own experience working with the deceased, this was unlike anything he had ever seen or heard of personally. Bodies naturally deteriorate. Quickly. Especially in heat and humidity. Yet here was Moshe.

The Chevra Kadisha members were shaken. They wanted a dayan to witness what they had seen. So they called Chacham Ovadia Yosef Toledano, whom R' Jonathan identifies as a dayan in the beis din of

Rav Asher Weiss. He came. He saw what had happened. And according to the story, he instructed that remarkable words be written on Moshe's kever: "לֹא שָׁלַט בּוֹ רִמָּה"-'***The worms did not have dominion over him.***' Moshe was then buried at Har HaMenuchos.

But for R' Jonathan, one question remained. Why?

R' Jonathan couldn't get the story out of his mind. He had worked with the Chevra Kadisha for years. He had been involved with burials of important people. He knew that physical deterioration did not simply depend on how prominent or respected a person had been. So he wanted to know: Who was Moshe Melamed? Was he a hidden gadol? A massive baal tzedakah? A person who spent his days immersed in Torah? Was there some extraordinary chesed that nobody knew about?

R' Jonathan decided to investigate. He traveled to Miami. He stayed with Moshe's son David. And he began questioning Moshe's wife, Nina. "Tell me about your husband."

Her answer surprised him. Moshe had not been observant his entire life. Until around the age of 52, he had lived a relatively ordinary, non-religious life. Then he became a baal teshuvah. He had been a businessman. He had owned taxi medallions. He earned a living. He lived simply. Nothing in the description immediately suggested an extraordinary hidden tzaddik.

R' Jonathan kept asking. "Was he a huge baal tzedakah?"

Not particularly.

"Was your house famous for hachnasas orchim?"

No.

"Was there some exceptional chesed?"

Nothing she could think of.

R' Jonathan looked around. There wasn't an enormous library of sefarim. Moshe had sefarim. He learned. He was observant. But

outwardly, he appeared to be exactly what everyone said he was: A simple Jew who had become a baal teshuvah later in life. So what was it?

R' Jonathan spent approximately four days asking around. He visited shuls. He spoke with rabbanim. He spoke with people who had known Moshe. He kept asking: What was special about this man?

Eventually, one thing began to emerge. There was one area in which Moshe was exceptionally careful. From the time he became religious, Moshe had made a firm decision: **He would not talk in shul**.

Not during davening. Not during Kaddish. Not during Kedushah. Not casual conversation. Not a phone call. He simply could not understand how someone could enter a beis haknesses, stand before Hashem - and carry on an ordinary conversation. This wasn't something he did for recognition. It wasn't a public campaign. It was simply something he believed in deeply. And he would not compromise on it.

There was one incident that showed just how sincere Moshe was. He was still relatively new to religious observance when a distinguished-looking religious Jew came to shul. The man had a large hat. A long beard. To Moshe, he looked like someone very elevated. Then Moshe saw him talking during Kaddish. Moshe was genuinely confused.

After davening, he approached him. Not to attack him. Not to embarrass him. He simply asked: "I don't understand. I learned that you're not supposed to talk during Kaddish. Why did you speak?"

The man did not appreciate the question. Instead, he attacked Moshe verbally. Who was Moshe to question him?

He responded so harshly that Moshe was deeply humiliated. Moshe had looked up to this man. Now he was being mocked by him. Tears came into Moshe's eyes. But he did not answer back. He didn't fight. He simply left.

The experience hurt him terribly. For a period afterward, it even affected his ability to return to shul comfortably. But eventually, he

came back. And he never abandoned the commitment he had made. He still would not talk in shul.

R' Jonathan points out something that should make us think. We look at people from the outside. We see the beard. The hat. The title. The reputation. The number of sefarim someone has learned. And we decide: This is a great person. But we have no idea how Shamayim measures a person. Moshe was clean-shaven. He looked ordinary. He became observant only in his fifties. He wasn't a famous rav. He wasn't a rosh yeshivah. He wasn't surrounded by thousands of talmidim. He lived what appeared to be a simple life. But there was one thing he guarded. When Moshe entered Hashem's house - he treated it as Hashem's house.

And R' Jonathan relates that today his kever at Har HaMenuchos bears the words: "לֹא שָׁלַט בּוֹ רִמָּה"-'***The worms did not have dominion over him.***'

Who was this man? Perhaps the answer is simpler than anyone expected. He was a Jew who gave Hashem one thing - completely.

Never underestimate the power of one mitzvah done with your whole heart.

The Brisker Rav zt"l says that although a person may have bad character traits, he remains a human being, albeit a flawed human being. However, if one does not show gratitude, he is no longer considered a human being!

The Alshich says that the mitzvah of Bikkurim demonstrates haKaras haTov, gratitude to Hashem.

HaKaras haTov is so important that the whole world was created just for this mitzvah, which teaches us the importance of the attribute of gratitude.

משל למה הדבר דומה

Judge John Kralik once hit a really low point in his life. Everything was going wrong. His work as a lawyer was failing, his personal life was becoming a mess, and he felt totally overwhelmed by his problems. He felt like he had nothing good left in his life.

One day, he had a simple but powerful idea. Instead of looking at what he was missing, he decided to focus on what he did have. He set a goal to write one handwritten thank-you notes every single day for a whole year.

At first, writing these notes felt a bit weird. But slowly, something amazing happened. Because he had to look for reasons to say thank you, he started noticing kind acts everywhere. He saw the good in his friends, coworkers, family, and even people he didn't know.

The biggest surprise wasn't how the notes made others feel, but how they changed him. His anger and sadness turned into real happiness. Because he was more thankful, his relationships got much better.

He later wrote a book called "*A simple act of gratitude*" - about how this small daily habit completely turned his life around.

The *Torah* value of *"hakaras hatov"* which means noticing and being thankful for the good things we get, is the opening message of this week's *Parsha* and it is also an essential tool to use as we get ready for *Rosh Hashanah.*

When we train ourselves to look for good, the way we see the whole world changes. Often, we think life has to get better before we can feel thankful. But it's actually the other way around. When we choose to be thankful first, our everyday life starts to feel full of blessings.





The Power of Words

Parshas Ki Savo occupies a unique place in our calendar. The Gemara in Maseches Megilah notes a requirement to ensure that Ki Savo is read annually before Rosh Hashanah, a ruling codified in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 428).

Rebbi Shimon ben Elazar explains that when Ezra HaSofer established the Torah reading cycle, he specifically mandated that Ki Savo be read leading up to the New Year.

Historically, certain communities such as the Bnei Ma'arava in Eretz Yisrael – followed a triennial cycle, finishing the Torah only once every three years. Their Simchas Torah celebrations were far less frequent than ours today. However, the rule regarding Ki Savo was absolute. Even if these communities were in the middle of a different section of the Torah, they would break their local cycle to align with the rest of the world for this specific reading.

Reb Tzadok HaKohen notes that this requirement functions similarly to the four special parshiyos read before Purim and Pesach (Shekalim, Zachor, Parah, and HaChodesh). It was deemed essential to prioritize this reading during this exact week. But what is the underlying reason for this urgency?

Rebbe Shimon ben Elazar explains that Parshas Ki Savo contains many curses. By reading them before Rosh Hashanah, we symbolically petition the Ribbono Shel Olam: **תכלה שנה וקללותיה** '*Let the old year and its curses come to an end.*'

One might wonder how the mere recitation of these warnings can nullify actual suffering or anxiety. Furthermore, Tosafos and the Rambam point out that we don't read Ki Savo on the Sabbath immediately preceding the holiday. Instead, we read it two weeks prior.



Furthermore, Tosafos and the Rambam offer another perspective. They point out that we don't read Ki Savo the week immediately preceding Rosh Hashanah. Instead, we move it up one week earlier. It's read two weeks before the yom tov. We leave a "buffer" week with Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech. We do not want to associate the harsh curses too closely with the New Year.

By reading the curses two weeks early, we effectively banish them. Then, we read Nitzavim full of blessings and solidarity – so that we enter Rosh Hashanah surrounded by positive energy.

The Tiferes Shlomo provides an incredible insight. He explains that when the Beis Hamikdash stood, a person who sinned would bring a karbon to achieve atonement. What does atonement mean? It meant that all the brachos in his life - his livelihood and health - were restored.

For us, though, how do we find atonement without the Beis HaMikdash? Chazal tell us **ונשלמה פרים שפתינו** - *"our lips shall replace the bulls – the karbanos."* If we speak, study, and *daven* about the *karbanos*, it's considered as if we actually offered them in the *Beis Hamikdash*. - Such is the power of our speech.

The Tiferes Shlomo says that before Rosh Hashanah if, Heaven forbid, a negative decree" was issued, we fulfil our obligation through reading these posukim." By reading the parshah of curses, it's as if the person has already endured them. He continues, 'consequently they will all be transformed into blessings for us.'

The Tiferes Shlomo applies this principle to the curses of Ki Savo. If a negative decree has been issued, reading these verses allows us to fulfill our "obligation" to suffer through the speech itself. By reading the curses, it is as if we have already endured them, allowing them to be transformed into blessings for the coming year.

The Tiferes Shlomo is teaching us a fundamental principle: when you read the words of the Torah, it's not merely performing a ritual, there's a practical spiritual effect. He says, "Do you realize what you're accomplishing? You are nullifying curses. You are tearing up harsh decrees." How? Simply by reading them from the Torah.

That's the immense power we possess in our speech. Those are the powerful effects of the words uttered from our mouths. This is not merely a ritual; it is a spiritual mechanism. When we read from the Torah, we possess the power to nullify harsh decrees and tear up negative judgments. Our words have immense, tangible effects in the spiritual realms.

This provides the necessary preparation for the High Holidays. Ezra Hasofer wanted us to recognize our agency as we enter the days of Selichos, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. We are not "just uttering words" during hours of prayer; we are actively shaping our reality.

By reading Ki Savo, we clear the slate by nullifying the curses. Then, through Nitzavim, we draw down the blessings we desire. This is the great encouragement of this season: the ability to cancel decrees and revoke curses through our connection to the Ribbono shel Olam. As the Chafetz Chaim teaches, however, the strength of this power depends on how we use our mouths throughout the year. The more we guard our tongues from lashon hara and avoid inappropriate language, the more potent our prayers become. By protecting the sanctity of our speech, we gain the ability to overturn any decree.

Precious Moments With Rav Chaim - Artscroll

What Would the Chazon Ish Do?

"When I was young — a few years after my wedding — I didn't know what to do about something," says Rav Chaim's son-in-law Rav Shraga Steinman. "I asked Rav Chaim. He thought for a few moments before telling me what to do.

"I was surprised because he usually had a clear answer ready right away. I wondered why he seemed less sure than usual.

"He must have read my mind because he said, 'You should know that I have followed the Chazon Ish since I was young. I asked him everything, and learned from him. Since he died, I have no rav. Whenever there's a question, I answer or act as he would have. When I don't know what he said about a matter, I think about what he would have said. That's the answer I give. That's how I do it!'"

Who Is That?

"Everyone knew that Rav Chaim would consent to be *sandek* at any *bris*," says Rav Chaim Moshe Katz. "He used to go to *brissim* that weren't even in Bnei Brak.

"One time, he needed to rest after a *bris*. He went to a friend's home, and his driver came with him. Rav Chaim saw a large mirror in the entry of his friend's home. He asked his driver, 'Who is this man?' He didn't know what he looked like. He'd never looked at a mirror. He had no interest in this world.

"He was at a gathering for Lev L'Achim. They showed photos of Rav Chaim's room. One photo showed Rav Chaim, with Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein and Rav Uri Zohar sitting at his side. Rav Chaim looked at the photo and asked, 'Who's that man in the middle, with the tefillin? My bookshelf is behind him, and next to him are men I know, but who's that in the middle? I don't know him.'"

The Notebook That Got Wet

This is one of thousands of things we learn from Rav Chaim about how a person should relate to other people. Rav Chaim is writing his thoughts in a notebook. He is using one commentary to explain a number of hard *sugyos*. A number of *sefarim* are open in front of him. His notebook is on top of the *sefarim*, and he is writing.

A man from the north of Eretz Yisrael comes in with some of his children. He is coming to ask for a *berachah* for one of his sons. He also wants to ask a question about another son. Rav Chaim is deep in his learning. After a few moments, he looks up and sees the family. He listens to what the father has to say. Then he gives his answer, and a berachah. One of the children doesn't notice the cup of water on the table. He bumps into it, and it spills on Rav Chaim's notebook and sefarim. The child doesn't realize what he's done and leaves the room.

Ray Chaim sees what happened, but he does not say a word. Not even half a word. He looks at all his work, which is now drenched. The first thing he asks the people in the room is to move the sefarim. To

leave them in a puddle shows a lack of respect. Then he asks if they can dry his notebook.

Baruch Hashem, the notebook is dry in a little while. There was no harm done. Not to the sefarim, and not to the little boy, who would have felt so bad if he had known.

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Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

A Lesson from this week's Tochacha from Rav Shimon Schwab

ובגוים ההם לא תרגיע ולא תהיה מנוח לכף רגלך

Sometimes we ourselves are not even aware that we are living in perilous circumstances. Human nature is such that when one is in a very serious and dangerous situation, he may tend to minimize or overlook it.

I remember the Germany of the early 30's, when Hitler *yemach shmo v'zichro* first came to power. There never was a person as evil as he was. If we were to take all the *reshaim* in history and bundle them together on one side of a scale, and put Hitler on the other side, he would outweigh them all combined.

While a small number of Jews left Germany immediately, most people thought that Hitler's government, with its virulent anti-Semitic policies, was an aberration that would soon "blow over", and normal democratic conditions would quickly return to Germany. This general attitude existed in Germany, and certainly in "faraway" Eastern Europe. … How blind these people were to the extremely menacing situation in which they lived.

… As free as we seem to be here, nevertheless, we should know that here too, in America, we are living in *galus*. There is hate all around us. This was a big surprise about fifteen years ago, but now we realize that even here in America we are not secure.

We came here because we were disliked in Europe, and we were suddenly forced to leave America, where would we find security? In Eretz Yisrael? There we are faced with the so-called "Palestinians", a relatively new entity, who don't like us there either, and who want the land for themselves [note: said over thirty years ago, before the other major threats to living in Eretz Yisroel]. Who says we will be secure there? Where shall we go? To the moon?

There is no place on earth where Jews are "*erwuensched*" (welcome), where the general population desires and would welcome an influx of Jews. Therefore, as long as we are in *galus*, we ask *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to protect us from the danger that lurks all around us, although such danger may be quite unknown to us.

… People may give many reasons for the Jew-hatred and suffering of our people throughout the ages; these could be political, economic, or ethnic in nature. However, the crux of the matter is, there is only one reason: **ומפני חטאנו גלינו מארצנו**, *we were driven from our land because of our sins*. This was predicted long ago in the Torah, **אם לא תשמור לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת וכו' ובגוים ההם לא תרגיע [ולא תהיה מנוח לכף רגלך]**, *If you will not be careful to perform all the words of this Torah … And amongst those nations you will not be tranquil* etc. ***We will find no rest among the nations as long as we continue to violate G-d's commandments in the Torah.***

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

26:5 אֲרַמִּי אֹבֵד אָבִי וַיֵּרֶד מִצְרַיְמָה וַיָּגָר שָׁם בִּמְתֵי מְעָט וַיְהִי־שָׁם לְגֹוי גָּד�ֹול עָצוּם וָרָב

I recently met a local rabbi, a well-known figure across our community whose counsel is sought by people from every imaginable walk of life. He asked to remain anonymous, and once you hear his story, it is entirely clear why.

He comes from what people often call a "simple" family - though in truth, no Jew is simple, as every *neshama* carries an irreplaceable,

priceless value. His brothers were practical men who naturally transitioned into trade and commerce, building comfortable, grounded lives. But his own heart burned for something else entirely: his soul yearned for the depth and wisdom of the *Torah*.

His choice was not met with easy acceptance. His parents placed heavy pressure on him to leave the *yeshivah*, step away from abstract study, and learn a practical craft that could secure a stable livelihood. The weight of that expectation eventually wore him down until he finally broke, ready to surrender his true calling. But at the absolute eleventh hour, his rabbi stepped in and told his parents the following ancient story:

Centuries ago, a wealthy farmer named Hyrcanus watched all his sons work diligently in his fields. All, that is, except for one. One son abandoned the farm, fleeing the physical labor to immerse himself in study.

Hyrcanus was furious. How could his son abandon a secure, guaranteed future for an intangible spiritual pursuit? While his brothers broke their backs in the field, this son simply sat and read. Hyrcanus reasoned that when the time came to divide his vast estate, this boy should receive nothing, having neither toiled nor labored for the family fortune.

Fueled by anger, Hyrcanus traveled all the way up to Jerusalem to formally disinherit his son before the rabbinic courts. When the father arrived in the holy city, however, he discovered that his runaway son had developed an incredible, unrivaled brilliance under the tutelage of *Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai*, the leader of the Jewish people. That young scholar was being ordained as a master teacher, standing as the greatest disciple of his generation. His name was *Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*.

When the great leader realized who the father was, he embraced Hyrcanus and proclaimed, "Blessed are you, for such greatness came from your house!"

Seeing the immense spiritual stature his son had attained, the father never disinherited him. Instead, Rabbi Eliezer became the enduring crown of the entire family.

Finishing the tale, the neighborhood rabbi asked the young man's parents, "Surely you have heard of the divine *Tanna*, *Rav Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*?" The father, a knowledgeable man, replied immediately, "Of course, In the *Mishnah*, he is defined as a plastered cistern that never loses a single drop. His brilliant insights fill our sacred texts."

The rabbi smiled and asked one final question: "And his hard-working brothers - what were their names?"

The room fell silent. Nobody knew. Their names dissolved into the passage of time, lost to the mundane routines of everyday life.

Touched by the realization, the young man stayed in the *yeshivah*, and the rest is history.

As the neighborhood rabbi walked away after sharing this story, a realization hit me. Just like the brothers of Rav Eliezer, no one actually knows the names of this local rabbi's brothers either. Despite their commercial success, they faded into the background, while the brother who chose a life of spiritual dedication became the anchor of his family's memory.

This dynamic lies at the very heart of the *Torah parsha* where we declare, "**אֲרַמִּי אֹבֵד אָבִי**" referring to Lavan's attempts to spiritually dismantle Yaakov. Lavan did not merely seek physical harm; he sought to absorb Yaakov into his material, self-serving worldview. Lavan's own sons were completely lost to history, forgotten because their lives were tethered only to temporary possessions.

Had Yaakov followed their path, he too would have been forgotten. Instead, Yaakov chose a life of righteousness and eternal values, earning a legacy so deep that our sages teach *"our father Yaakov did not die"* - he lives on through the vibrant heritage he built.

We often meet people who take immense pride in their ancestry, boasting of great grandfathers or celebrated lineages from generations long past. A noble lineage is meaningless if the present generation abandons the very values that made their ancestors great.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman



As the **Yismach Yisrael** says, Hashem is teaching us something here. It says in the Mishnah, **Bikkurim, Chapter 3, Mishnah 3**, that when those bringing the *Bikkurim* arrived near Yerushalayim:

"When they reached close to Yerushalayim, they sent messengers ahead and decorated their Bikkurim. The officials, deputies, and treasurers would go out to greet them."

Everyone went out to greet whom? A simple villager who was bringing a small basket of *Bikkurim*.

The Mishnah continues:

"According to the honor of those entering, they would go out. And all the craftsmen of Yerushalayim would stand before them and ask about their welfare: 'Our brothers, people of such-and-such a place, may you come in peace.'"

The Yismach Yisrael asks: What is happening here? We are talking about a simple villager. He takes a *tena*—a basket—with his *Bikkurim*. And we know what that can mean: perhaps one fig from a tree, one

cluster of grapes, just a small amount of fruit. Yet the the dignitaries of Yerushalayim—go out to greet him.

Why?

The Yismach Yisrael explains that the Torah is teaching every person the incredible value of a mitzvah. Even what may appear to be a small and insignificant mitzvah, performed by an ordinary person working in his field, is enormously precious to **הקב"ה**.

Even if all he did was have a good and sincere thought—that the fruit in his basket should become *Kodesh LaHashem*—that itself is so precious before Hashem that it is worthy of honor and celebration. - The *malachei rachamim* themselves adorn such a person with many crowns.

Says the Yismach Yisrael: ***Every person can strengthen himself, no matter what his situation is. If he has merited to do even one mitzvah, or even to have one good thought—that is something of tremendous value.***

So, *rabbosai*, we have to strengthen ourselves. Just strengthen ourselves. - ***One small basket of Bikkurim.***



What if the biggest obstacle to happiness isn't having too little? It's having so much that we stop noticing it. This week's **פרשה** tells us a very fundamental lesson. We read many of the **קללות**, the curses that **חס ושלום** could befall us. Why? What could we possibly have done wrong to deserve this?

The **תורה** provides us with the answer. It's simple.

תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל. You simply didn't serve **ה'** with **שמחה**. You weren't happy about it. You served **ה'**, yes, but it wasn't with real, true, genuine **שמחה**.

I want to concentrate on just two words: **מרב כל**. The **תורה** doesn't say you didn't serve **ה'** with **שמחה** because you didn't have enough. It says because you had so much.

That's the frightening thing about **מרב כל**. Sometimes having more makes us appreciate less. We get used to the food, we get used to our homes, we get used to our families, we get used to our health. And when something becomes normal, we stop seeing it as a gift.

Viktor Frankl, the Jewish psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, later wrote about an experience from his imprisonment that became one of the most powerful observations in his life. - While being transported in prison, he watched people lose almost everything that had previously seemed completely ordinary: home, family, privacy, food, clothing, freedom, and even the ability to make simple choices. Frankl noticed something psychologically profound: when a person loses something completely ordinary, he suddenly discovers how extraordinary it actually was. He describes in his 'Man's Search for Meaning' his experience as a prisoner in the concentration camp.

Food was so scarce that prisoners received only a small daily ration of bread and watery soup. Frankl writes that prisoners would debate how to divide the tiny piece of bread, whether to eat the bread immediately or save some for later. He describes that one morning, when the prisoners were being forced out into the cold, his shoes were wet and his painfully swollen feet made walking difficult. In the middle of that terrible morning, Frankl reaches into his pocket and finds a small piece of bread that he saved earlier this morning.

He writes that in that moment, he ate it with absorbed delight. The bread hadn't changed; it was the same bread that under normal

circumstances probably wouldn't have meant very much to him. What changed was his awareness of its value. Maybe that's what the **תורה** means when adding those two crucial words: **מרב כל**.

The real **שמחה** in life begins when we learn to see the ordinary things in our lives as extraordinary gifts. Appreciate them. - Have an amazing **שבת**.

Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

Don't Forget Yourself

Welcome back to **מדרש ומעשה**, sharing a story for this week's **פרשה, פרשת כי תבוא**.

As part of the epic story of the Mir Yeshiva's almost miraculous salvation during the war by traveling from Vilna through Siberia to Japan and eventually to Shanghai, so there were other people who joined on with that trip. Other yeshivas, perhaps only partially, **חכמי לובלין, ליובאוויטש** yeshiva, and the Rebbe, **ר' שמעון שלום קאליש**, the **אמשינאווער** Rebbe, who also joined along together with his son **ר' מאיר**.

A wedding took place in Shanghai. **ר' מאיר**'s daughter became engaged to **ר' חיים מילקובסקי**, one of the great **עילויים**, one of the great geniuses of the Mir Yeshiva. The wedding took place in Shanghai in the **בית אהרן שול**, which was where the yeshiva set up their base. And the parents of the **כלה** were there, but the **חתן** didn't have his parents. His father had already passed away.

He had no family there. The **תנאים**, which is, I guess you could call the conditions of engagement, it's the document done when expressing the commitment to get married, has a portion in which someone is listed as **העומד מצד החתן**, the person who stands by the side of the **חתן**, and **העומד מצד הכלה**, and the one who stands by the **כלה**. Usually this position is taken by the father of the **חתן** or the **כלה**. Here, since **ר' חיים**'s father wasn't there, the **משגיח** of the

yeshiva, the **צדיק ר׳ יחזקאל לוינשטיין זצ״ל**, he stood in, and it said **העומד מצד החתן ר׳ יחזקאל לוינשטיין**.

This was on one hand a great honor, but the **אמשינאווער** Rebbe, the grandfather of the **כלה, ר׳ שמעון שלום**, looked at the **חתן** and he was able to see the pain that he felt in the fact that even though a great **צדיק** was there, standing by his side so to speak, he didn't have his father there, he didn't have family members there. He took the **חתן** aside to speak for a while, and **ר׳ חיים מילקובסקי** said that that was the time that he really formed a bond with what he called the **אלטע שווער**, right, meaning the grandfather of his wife-to-be. And he sensed **ר׳ חיים**'s pain and talked to him about it, and then he told him a message that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

He said that you have to understand, he says that really, **העומד מצד החתן חיים מילקובסקי**, the one who is standing by the side of the **חתן חיים מילקובסקי**, is **חיים מילקובסקי**. - **וחזקת והיית לאיש**, be strong, and be the man that you can be, because realize that **הקדוש ברוך הוא** has given you the **כוחות**, the strength to build and to go on yourself.

And he said that that helped strengthen him for the rest of his life.

עם ישראל has the ability to stand as a nation, and each individual has to understand that as much as we're supposed to get help from others and we're supposed to help others, **הקדוש ברוך הוא** has also given you internal strength as an individual. Wishing everyone a wonderful, peaceful, and healthy **שבת**. **כל טוב**